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A

CURE FOR SCANDAL;

OR

DETRACTION DISPLAYED.

AS EXHIBITED BY

GOSSIPS, TALKERS-OVER, LAUGHERS-AT, BANTERERS, NICKNAMERS, STINGERS, SCORNERS, SNEERERS, EYE-INFLICTERS, MIMICKS, CARICATURISTS AND EPIGRAMMATISTS.

BY AMELIA OPIE,

Author of Illustrations of Lying.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY JAMES LORING,

132 Washington Street.

1839.

Transferred from
Charlestown branch
Sept. 18. 1896
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PREFACE.

—

With more than usual self-distrust, I give this book to the world, and under circumstances of a new and trying nature. The voice of affectionate encouragement, which used to animate me to my task, I can hear no more; and when, from the force of habit, I have sometimes turned round, while writing, to ask as in former times for counsel and advice, I have been painfully reminded, that the judicious critic, as well as tender parent, was removed from me forever. But I have the consolation of knowing, that should this work excite severe animadversion, *he* will not share in this expected pain;—I say "expected," because detraction is as common as the air we breathe, and to some, from long indulgence in it, it is now almost as necessary; and an endeavor to

substitute profitable discourse for talking-over and laughing at one's friends and neighbors, will be thought nearly as cruel as to exclude the air necessary for respiration.

Nor have I been encouraged to my labors by any sanguine expectation of doing good: for so rare is self-knowledge, that though I am often told that Detraction abounds, that my work is necessary, and will, no doubt, benefit others, scarcely any one says, "I hope it will be of benefit to me;" yet, general improvement can only be the result of individual reformation. Besides, even those persons, who complain that the sin is universal, speak in a careless, indifferent tone, as if they thought it had acquired a prescriptive right to remain so, and that the endeavor to make it less common must be Utopian Reverie.

I have, however, been cheered in my labors by one conviction,—namely, that though what I have written may offend many of my readers, and benefit but few, it will at least, as I humbly trust, warn and amend MYSELF.

DETRACTION DISPLAYED.

CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION.

It is a generally admitted truth, that OBSERVATION is one of the most effectual methods of improving the mind—observation, therefore, may be justly reckoned amongst the most valuable faculties which we possess. But, like all other gifts, it is liable to be abused, especially when it is exercised on the character of others; for then, if not under the directing and restraining power of religious principles, it leads to that pernicious vice in society, known by the name of DETRACTION.

To observe (that is to discover) the faults and vices of those with whom we associate, is often a measure necessary for self-defence. But if the observers of the frailties of their friends and acquaintances make those frailties the theme of backbiting conversation, they pervert the useful faculty of observation to the pernicious purposes of DETRACTION.

All who have lived in the world with any consciousness of their own besetting sins, or those of others, *must* readily admit, that in every class or rank in society, from the peer to the peasant, from the master to the valet, from the mistress to the maid, from the most learned to the most ignorant,

from the man of genius to the man of the meanest capacity, detraction is amongst the most common of all vices, and is one in which persons indulge with perfect self-complacency as well as evident enjoyment.

Should self-reproach and moral disgust at a long continued detracting conversation lead any individual to endeavor to change the subject, and raise its tone to a more intellectual pitch, how often is the virtuous effort wholly fruitless—how often do the conversers seize the first opportunity of escaping from the useful consideration of things, to the mischievous discussion of persons; till, to the mental eye, the scene of this petty warfare against absent friends and acquaintances seems strewed with mutilated qualities, mangled talents and shattered reputations.

It is my intention to point out the deformity of this common vice in the following pages; though I am well aware, that no small degree of unpopularity attends on all authors who hold up to their readers, as in a mirror, their darling and daily sins. But to excuse my presumption to them as well as to myself, I beg leave to add that, in writing this book, I have been influenced by the wish to effect my own reformation as well as that of others; for, being conscious of falling frequently into the sin of detraction, I could in no surer way arm myself against myself, than by publishing precepts which it will be incumbent upon me to enforce by my own example.

I intend to show the *origin* of this besetting sin; to describe its habitual style, and the situations which are most likely to lead into the practice of it; to divide into classes the different species of detractors; and humbly to suggest such hints for self-government in conversation, as may, if acted upon, preclude even the desire to indulge in detraction.

CHAPTER II.

ON GENERAL AND PARTICULAR COMPETITION.

WHENEVER we see a great effect produced, it is natural for us to wish to find out its most efficient cause. Therefore, as detraction possesses unlimited power in society, one is desirous of ascertaining its chief source; and it appears to me, that the most abundant source of detraction is COMPETITION. The love of distinction and notice, common to us all, prompts to GENERAL and PARTICULAR competition; and when we are conscious that those with whom we are put in competition, by ourselves or others, are more noticed and distinguished than we are, by particular individuals, or by the world at large, envy is excited in our hearts, and that envy leads to detraction. Hence, though I freely admit that detraction, and even defamation, may sometimes proceed from a mere love of talking, I still believe that they are usually caused by GENERAL OR PARTICULAR COMPETITION.

Competition is not confined to the human species. Petted animals are as susceptible of it as men and women. They are displeased when they see occasional caresses bestowed by their owners on rival favorites; and if neglected for other pets, their jealousy is manifested to every one, and they not unfrequently vent their rage on the objects of their envy. They can, however, inflict injuries *only on the body;* but human beings can injure the fame and the peace also of their rivals. For it frequently happens that some one, either through ill-judging kindness, or real malignity, in the garb of good intention, lets the subjects of satire know, that their claims to virtues, talents, and graces, are nibbled away by the teeth of time-killing gossips, or torn

in pieces by the fangs of scandal-mongers, and murderers of reputations.

I shall now endeavor to define what I consider to be general, and what particular competition.

General competition is a desire of notice and attention, common to us all. Few persons enter into society without wishing to become objects of notice *at least*. Even the *humblest* of human beings would be hurt, if, while passing an evening in company, no conversation was addressed to themselves, and they would not only exclaim against the dulness of the party, but would naturally feel envious of their companions: and unless under strong religious or moral restraint, they would be led to detract from the merit of the rest of the company the next time that they were named in their presence. Detraction, consequently, would, in this case, be the result of the DISAPPOINTED DESIRE OF NOTICE. Nor was it necessary that the persons so disappointed should imagine they possessed claims to distinction: they might be, as I before observed, the humblest of their species, but it was enough that they were *social beings*, that they had *human sympathies*; that attention and notice appeared to them a sort of public property, to which with others they had a common right; and being denied participation in it, they gave way to envy, and envy led to detraction. But had they possessed *certain talents*, and exerted them at the party, in rivalship with their companions, they would have been in PARTICULAR COMPETITION; and had they felt themselves *excelled*, their comments would probably have been more severe, as *then* the prize aimed at would not only have been *notice*, but *admiration*, and in proportion to the ambition, is usually the disappointment.

I must here observe, that though we may be unconsciously in *general competition*, and know not that our detraction proceeds from the envy which a sense of rivalry excites; we must be conscious when we are in *particular* competition, and if we reflect at all, our motives must be clear to us as they are to *others*.

Professional jealousy is proverbial, and whence does this proceed but from competition? But in a metropolis, competition is *general*, in a provincial town it becomes *particular;* as the narrower the field of rivalry, the more pointed is the jealousy. But though all unsuccessful rivalship is hard to bear, that which more immediately provokes the deadly vengeance of the detracting tongue, is the successful rivalship that is *forced upon the sight* and the conviction. The barrister or the solicitor, the physician or the surgeon, who sits at home anxiously expecting the business which, for *him*, never arrives, though he concludes that it goes to some one else, will probably be tempted to some unkind remarks on his more successful brethren. But if the solicitor who has no clients, enters an assize or sessions-court, time after time, as a spectator and an idle one merely; if the barrister sits in those courts *briefless* and *unheeded*, seeing his rivals employed, and listening reluctantly to their successful eloquence; if the medical man, while going on foot to visit his two or three patients, sees the never-resting gigs or chariots of his competitors driving across his path, proving at every turn their superior popularity; it is, I believe, impossible for *unregenerated nature*, not to feel sensations of mortification and envy, which would very probably lead to the bitterest remarks on the professional skill of the successful rivals.

But the jealousies of competition and its results are by no means confined to the professions of Law and Physic. PUBLIC CHARACTERS in ALL professions, experience the dangerous feelings produced by *general* and *particular* competition; and the most distinguished amongst them have often suffered in their interest, their reputation, and their peace of mind, from the detraction and defamation excited by their success.

Painters and sculptors, may be said to be always in *general* competition, and consequently are exposed to the temptations which attend it; but they

are in *particular* competition, when their performances are submitted to public view in a gallery, or in the annual exhibition at Somerset House. If an artist enters the exhibition rooms day after day, and sees a loudly-applauding crowd before the pictures or sculpture of others, while no one is standing, in either loud or silent admiration, before his own, he must be under a very unusual degree of moral government, if he forbears to detract from the merit of the work so evidently preferred to his own; and will undoubtedly return home from this scene of disappointed claims, with a sense of mortification, which nothing can allay but rigid criticism on the performances of his rivals; in which his eye, seeing through the medium of unsuccessful competition, magnifies defects, and throws beauties into the shade.

All candidates for fame must be wounded by reading the praises of their successful competitors in the daily prints, if nothing, or nothing in commendation, be said of themselves. But those who are brought, at the same time, into personal and direct competition in public, are tempted to detraction more powerfully than any other class; because *loud applauses* are often bestowed on some of those competitors, while the rest are heard in silence, or find their efforts received with marked disapprobation. Hence the jealousy of persons in these classes of society is said to be the strongest; but, if it be so, considering the infirmity of human nature, it must be allowed to be the most excusable.

Authors also, as public characters, are often under the influence of painful feelings excited by competition. Except when they are competitors for prizes at college, they are not, indeed, called into that close rivalry which causes the most bitter jealousy, and its most painful results; but they are exposed to feel envy and mortification, and do undoubtedly feel them, if they see their own works criticised, and those of others commended.

Before I proceed, I would fain impress on the

minds of those who read this book, and are humble enough to admit the possibility of their learning something from worldly experience, though they may think meanly of the ability of the author, that the simple desire of NOTICE and ATTENTION, without the exertion and collision of similar talents, is sufficient to account for much of the detraction which exists in society. Dr. Goldsmith was a remarkable proof of the truth of this assertion. Boswell says, that "when Goldsmith was accompanying two beautiful young ladies, with their mother, on a tour to France, he was seriously angry that more respect was paid to them than to him." And Dr. Johnson said of him, "Sir, he is so afraid of being *unnoticed*, that he often talks lest one should forget he is in the company." And once, (according to Boswell,) at the exhibition of the Fantoccini in London, when those who sat next him observed with what dexterity a puppet was made to toss a pike, he could not bear that it should have such praise, and exclaimed with some warmth, "Pshaw! *I can do it better myself.*" It is also related of him, that he expressed a wish to destroy the Lincolnshire ox, because it was the theme of general wonder, and the object of general attention. This was, undoubtedly, the simple JEALOUSY of NOTICE, as he could not compete in beauty with the ladies in question, nor with the mechanist in skill, nor with the ox in size, but he was impatient and angry merely because they attracted attention from himself.

It is with reluctance that I have brought forward the infirmities of a man so highly gifted as Oliver Goldsmith—a writer from whose works the British public has probably derived more varied intellectual delight, than from most other authors; but I thought it necessary in order to strengthen my own opinion on this subject. However, it may be advantageous to us all to remember, that, as a mind, powerful and superior as his, was liable to be overcome by the vice of envy, it was doubly incumbent on weaker minds to be *watchful against* its power; for,

whether it be in little or in great things, the feeling of competition in us is *daily* called forth, and its results are often degrading to ourselves, and mischievous to others.

The candid and the generous could turn from Goldsmith's weaknesses to admire his excelling talents; but how can detractors escape unmitigated censure, who, without talents to compensate for their defects, often take a mean delight in ridiculing "*the excellence they cannot reach.*"

The competition amongst women on the score of personal charms is notorious, and the rivalry of professed beauties, is even *proverbial.* Addison, in the first volume of the Spectator, gives a story illustrative of this sort of competition, which I originally intended to introduce in these pages, but as I have never seen it carried to such weak and odious lengths as he describes, amongst beauties of the present day, and think the whole tale beyond the bounds of nature and probability, I shall simply refer my readers to the tale itself.

But though I cannot fully accede to the truth of Addison's painting, in the tale in question, yet I believe, that most women, and I dare say most men, can remember that, at some period of their lives, they have gone into company, meaning to enter into general, and perhaps, *particular* competition; not on the score of beauty, like Phillis and Brunetta in the tale, but on that of agreeableness and smartness in dress and appearance, and that in proportion to their conviction of having attracted superior notice and general admiration, has been their pleasure during the evening; and according to their consciousness of failure in the objects of their ambition, has been its pain. "How did you like the party last night, at Lady ———'s," said a friend of mine to an acquaintance, (now no more, I believe,) who piqued herself on her personal charms. "O! it was delightful!" was her ingenuous reply, "all the women were so ugly!" There the feeling of competition was carried on to the utmost, for the

party was rendered delightful to this lady, merely by her conviction that no one present could compete with her in beauty. I shall now treat of competitions of perhaps a *lower* nature. Competitions general and particular in houses, furniture and style of living.

"We must live up to our rank or station in life, or to our real or imputed fortune," is often the language of the *head* or ruler of every considerable family in Europe, probably, when parsimony or principle does not prevent this feeling from being acted upon. "We must live as our neighbors and equals do," is another axiomic phrase, by which many persons in society are governed in their domestic arrangements. And a feeling of *general* competition is its source amongst the first class, and of *particular* competition amongst the latter.

The man of rank desires to live as his ancestors did, and as his peers do, but does not wish to vie with any particular individual in his own class. The man of a certain station, or consequence in life, wishes to live like men of his standing in the world; and the rich or *seemingly* rich man is desirous of living like other men in the world at large, who appear on a level with himself; and these persons are consequently in *general* competition. But those who say, "we must live, and do as our neighbors live and do," are residents probably in the bounded circle of a country town or village, and have some family or persons in view with whom they feel *particular competition*. In a metropolis, one has no neighbors, nor is it easy to ascertain who there are one's equals or inferiors. It is in provincial residences that the feeling of particular competition is called forth;—it is from the facility of ascertaining, with some degree of accuracy, who our neighbors are, and whether our friends and relations, are equal to ourselves in opulence, that this often ensnaring and ruinous rule of living, this proof of pride of heart and weakness of judgment, escapes the lips, "One must do as our neighbors do,

one must live as one's neighbors live." And, perhaps, the sense of competition can never be so dangerous as when it prompts to the foregoing expressions, and instead of principle and prudence, makes the expenses of others the regulation of our own.

The following dialogue will not only exemplify my meaning, but at the same time represent a true picture of many family deliberations. "Pray, papa, let me learn music," says an ambitious little girl to her indulgent father: "Emily D—— learns, and why should not I?" "Because her papa is very *rich*, my dear, and I am not." "O! dear papa, I am sure you can afford it as well as he, and really, papa, every body wonders you do not let me learn as Emily does." "But it costs so much money, Louisa, and these are hard times, besides, Emily has an ear for music, and you perhaps have not." "O! dear papa, I am sure I have quite as good an ear as she has, and she has very little voice, and I have a great deal. Dear me! every body says I should sing and play so well if I were to learn! and really, papa, people will think you quite stingy." "Well, well, child, if I know myself not to be so, that does not signify; but I will hear what your mother says." "O! papa, I know mamma wishes it as much as I do; she does not like Emily D—— should be more accomplished than I am." "Nor I neither, my dear; but you are young yet." "Young, papa! I am two months older than Emily D——." "Indeed! well, but wait till next year." "Next year! and let Emily get so much before me! I might then just as well not learn at all." Here, just as the young voice is beginning, probably, to falter with mingled anger and disappointment, the mother enters. "So, my dear," cries her husband, "I find you have been putting extravagant wishes into our child's head." "How so?" "She wishes to learn music, and says that you approve it." "Well, my dear, and so I do, and where is the extravagance or impropriety? you can afford it; and really, those D——s and those L——s are so set up, and so con-

ceited of their children's acquirements, that as our Louisa is quite as clever as they are, I do think she ought to have as many advantages." "I think so too; but if she has a music master, she must give up her drawing master. I cannot with prudence let her have both." Here an indignant exclamation from both mother and daughter interrupts the speaker, and Louisa falters out, "Give up my drawing master, papa, just as I have begun to copy prints?" "What, my dear, make the poor child give up her master now that he says she has such a genius, that she has already made a better copy of a head of Vandyke, than Emily D——, who has learnt twice the time; and that Harriet L——'s eyes, noses, and ears, though she is much older, are not to be compared to Louisa's?" "Is this really the case?" cries the gratified father, overcome by these proofs of his child's superiority; "well then, I fear I must consent to let Louisa have two masters at once, but she must promise to be very diligent, and learn quickly, for I assure you, my dear, that business just now is very dead, and things are not going well, and I feel that I ought to draw in a little; however, I am willing to stretch a point for Louisa's advantage."

Thus the feeling of competition with the set up D——s and L——s, comes in aid of parental affection, and parental vanity, and the point is carried: Emily D—— must not be permitted to excel his own daughter in what, by the world, is deemed *indispensable* knowledge; and the suggestions of a well principled prudence are wholly disregarded. Nor, probably, will these indulgent parents ever hear Emily D—— sing or play with any pleasure again. They will always be comparing her performance with that of their own Louisa, and they will be ready to say, that she sings out of tune, and plays out of time, whenever her musical abilities are the theme of conversation. Yet far be it from me to ridicule even the weakness of parental affection. A tender and indulgent parent must ever be

in my eyes, an object of affectionate reverence; but in this instance, and I believe it is a common instance, the indulgence was not the result of yielding affection only, but was full as much occasioned by a weak feeling of *particular competition*, and that feeling was leading the father to permit what his circumstances could but ill afford; he was therefore running the risk of injuring the fortune of that very child, whose young and dangerous ambition he was thus thoughtlessly willing to gratify. Alas! I fear we all have, or have had, though in different instances, and *on different occasions*, our Emily D——s, and our Harriet L——s.

I shall now recapitulate what has been said in this chapter.

That competition is of two kinds, general and particular.

That general competition is often *unconscious*, but that *particular* competition must be *consciously* experienced. That both lead to envy and to detraction.

That competition is not confined to the human species, but that petted animals are equally susceptible of it.

That professional jealousies are proverbial, whether they be those of general competition in a metropolis, or particular competition in a country town, but that those of the latter are from the closeness of the competitorship, the most bitter, and most likely to lead to detraction.

That all public characters, when brought into immediate collision, are more especially exposed to feel envy, and be guilty of detraction, as the result of *particular* competition.

That it is not necessary to be in particular competition to feel envy; that a general desire for notice is sufficient to cause it, and I give anecdotes of Dr. Goldsmith to prove this.

That the jealous rivalry of women on the score of personal charms is notorious: and lastly, "we must do as others do, and live as others live," is a powerful but dangerous rule of action.

CHAPTER III.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

The competition between party and ball giving ladies is every where known and acknowledged, whether they reside in a metropolis or in the country, in a city or a village—whether the giver of the entertainment be a dutchess, or only the wife of a country gentleman, or a rich tradesman; but, even on these occasions, the bitterness of the rivalry must be in proportion to the closeness of the competition.

"When Greek meets Greek then comes the tug of war." The peeress will be, comparatively, indifferent to the consciousness that her entertainment was inferior in splendor and excellence to that of her country or city rivals; nor will the latter be mortified at hearing of the superior attractions of the fete given by the peeress.

But, if the peeress be outshone by a rival peeress, and the country lady and rich citizen's wife be eclipsed by party givers of their own rank in life, then the unsuccessful competition leads to *particular* envy, and that envy, most probably, vents itself in detraction.

But, though particular as well as general competition as certainly takes place in a metropolis as in a provincial residence, it is more common in the narrow circle of a country town, and its neighborhood.

Competition in giving a dinner, and in the excellence as well as number of the dishes, is never so powerful perhaps as in a bounded circle, and it is rarely that professed dinner-givers *there* admit that they ever see, or eat, an elegant and good dinner

any where but at their own table; not that they are at all to be pitied on this occasion; for the pain of eating ill-dressed viands is not to be weighed in the balance against the satisfaction with which the dinner-giver utters, "It was certainly not such a dinner as I should have given!" This is however one of the most innocent detractions, and I mention it merely to show how immediately, even in *trifles*, detraction is the result of competition; "And little things are great to little men," says the poet, as the following anecdote of a gentleman who lived many years in a country town in ——, will, I trust, amusingly exemplify. This gentleman piqued himself on giving good dinners, and equally so on entertaining, sometimes, at his well filled table, the noblemen and other great personages residing in the neighborhood. The day after one of these occasions, and when he thought that he and his cook had exceeded themselves, he called on a friend who lived near him to describe to her his conscious success, and give her a detail of the feast; but just before he had begun it, one of his late guests knocked at the door. "There is Mrs. such a one," exclaimed he, "I dare say she will talk of my dinner. Let me hide myself behind the screen, I should so like to hear what she says of it." Accordingly, not waiting for leave, the dinner-giver took possession of his hiding-place. He was right in his conjectures, for the lady (a dinner-giver herself probably) was full of the entertainment of the preceding day, and as soon as the question of "but what dishes were in the first course?" was asked, she regularly and rapidly mentioned them all, till she came to the fourth corner dish, which, after many attempts, she was still unable to remember, and was just saying, "I really do not know what that dish was," when the impatient dinner-giver burst from his concealment regardless of exposure, and throwing down the screen in his eagerness to do his dinner justice, exclaimed, "Hot lobsters, ladies! hot lobsters!" This story may appear to others perhaps trifling and

absurd, but had the censurers heard it, as I did, told by a lady who possesses, amongst many far higher and more valuable gifts, *l' art de raconter* in the highest perfection, they would probably have been as much amused by it as I was.

In a country town, when those who have hitherto gone on foot, set up a close carriage, a sense of mortification is often felt, because the circumstance tells a tale of increased and increasing opulence in the parties who do it; and if they were below their fellow-citizens, at one period of their lives, in rank and expectations, a long time must elapse before they are allowed to enjoy their well-earned wealth, without being the objects of petty detraction. But this new carriage will tempt some few individuals to *particular* competition with its possessor, and if, ultimately, prudence prevails, and they dare not yield to the temptation of keeping a carriage themselves, *then* the newly aggrandized become probably to them, provocations to constant satire and derision: the reality of their opulence is doubted, and their right to keep this evidence of riches is denied, while the detractors are wholly unconscious, that if the objects of their censure had not launched out into a style of living, in which they dared not follow them, they would still have remained in their eyes, industrious, thriving, excellent people.

But, less prudent than the above-mentioned detractors, how many a John Nokes has set up his carriage, built or hired a country house, merely because Tom Stiles had just done so before him; and because his wife's or children's jealousy of being outshone by those who were once perhaps their inferiors, in consequence, is really the impelling motive to the indulgence, though the ostensible plea be that of health and convenience. How many diamond ear-rings have shone on the ears of even unpretending matrons, merely because those of a friend or relation have thus been decorated, or that some flattering gossip has said, "I wonder your husband should not buy jewels for you, they would

become you better than Mrs. such a one, for we all remember the time when she was in a very different line of life to what she now is, but it is surprising how some people get on in the world!" and unless the mind of the person addressed is exceedingly well-disciplined, it is most likely that she could not help replying, "But they do say that the husband has made some unfortunate speculations lately, and the wife we know is not the best of managers," and so on in increasing and mutual detraction. But this detraction might never have taken place, had not these ladies been in particular competition with the lady with the diamond ear-rings, because they were perhaps of the same age, of the same personal pretensions, moved in the same *family circle*, or that their husbands were in the same line of business.

In their power of exciting pernicious jealousies, the competitions between public characters are nearly equalled by the rivalships in a public ball-room. Nor are private balls, concerts, or any scenes for the display of rival accomplishments, wholly exempted from the dangers alluded to. The first public ball is often anticipated by a girl on her entrance into the world, as the climax of every thing delightful, and as if it were the chief end of her education, and even of her existence. But I fear that many an amiable girl leaves the ball-room a degree less amiable than when she first entered it. She has begun a career of rivalship and display. She has come into general and particular competition with her young acquaintances. If, as she goes down the dance, or exhibits her graces in the quadrille, she hears encomiums on her own charms and elegant performance, her vanity is perniciously fed, she is in danger of considering a ball-room as her sphere, and the scene of the greatest delights, while the modest, safe enjoyments of domestic life become comparatively insipid. If, on the contrary, she overhears the praises of her competitors, she is exposed to feel the pain of jealousy and mortification, and the young acquaintances who

were, perhaps, dear to her before that evening, she will, at least, be in future inclined to depreciate. But, if she be so wise and amiable as to remain in this scene of danger and temptation, uninjured by her own success, or that of others, I fear that those most interested in her triumphs will not entirely escape from the snares attendant on competition; and parents, or affectionate relations, who had hitherto been candid in judging the merits of their friends' and neighbors' children, will learn to depreciate their claims to admiration as soon as they behold them in a ball-room, in particular competition with their own children and relatives. But, if even the successful and the distinguished there be exposed to occasional mortification, and its censorious results, how strong must be the temptation to detraction experienced by those unfortunate individuals, who have succeeded neither in general nor particular competition, and having gone home without having been asked to dance, at all, or been forced to accept a disagreeable partner, rather than not dance! Surely, *their* hours after the ball, while they draw closely round the domestic hearth on their return, to talk over the scenes of the evening, with those to whom they probably appeared the "wonder of their kind," must have been passed in taking to pieces, as the phrase is, their more admired competitors, unless they were to an unusual degree under moral restraint. Therefore, both to the successful and to the unsuccessful, to those in general and those in particular competition, the first ball is the beginning of a series of dangers and temptations, which are likely to have a pernicious effect on the youthful mind and character. Nor are the youth of the other sex exempted from the temptations to evil attendant on such scenes. They are rivals in the choice of partners, and in skill in the dance; therefore, successful and unsuccessful competition will have the same effect on them as on my own sex; and who that has ever listened to the comments of men as well as women

on each other, but must allow, that detraction from the merits of their competitors is the besetting sin of men as well as of women. May I be permitted to observe here, that long experience has taught me to believe, that happy and privileged indeed are those, whatever may be their own *peculiar line of temptation*, who are born under circumstances which exclude them from the dangers incident to the ball and the concert room! And happy and favored also are they, who, having experienced their pleasures and their dangers, have been willing to resign them even in their early years, for the more harmless pleasures of domestic life, and been contented to exert the talents which charmed an admiring crowd, to give variety to the amusements of their family circle, to gladden the parental heart, and to render home to all its inhabitants the dearest and most delightful, as well as the safest place on earth.

I wish to indulge myself in giving an extract from one of Baroness de Stael's works, which bears directly and powerfully on the subject before me. "Observe," says that admirable writer, "a young woman in a ball-room, wishing to be thought the handsomest woman there, but fearing that her wishes may be disappointed! Pleasure, in whose name the party had assembled, is annihilated to her. She has not a single moment's enjoyment; for every moment is, to her, absorbed by her ruling ambition, and by the efforts which she makes to conceal it. She watches the looks, the slightest signs of the observations of others, with the attention of the moralist, the uneasiness of the ambitious; and being anxious to conceal from all eyes the sufferings of her mind, it is by her affectation of gaiety during the triumph of her rivals, by the turbulence of her conversation, while she hears her rivals applauded, and by the too eager kind of overacted interest with which she accosts them; it is by these superfluous efforts that she betrays her real feelings. Grace, that crowning charm of beauty,

cannot exist without the repose and artlessness of confidence; uneasiness and constraint deprives us even of the advantages which we possess. The contraction of wounded self-love alters and disfigures the face, while a consciousness of this painful truth increases the evil, without giving power to remove it. Pain, therefore, is multiplied by pain, and the end in view is thrown at a greater distance even by the attempt to obtain it." And in the picture, which this highly-gifted woman draws, of the competitions of a ball-room,—this picture, as she calls it, of the history of a child,—she sees, as she expresses it, a foundation of the sorrows and disappointments of mankind in general, and confirms with her valuable opinion, my own belief, that competition, in one way or another, is the operating cause of most of the evils, the sins, and the disappointments of life.

It has been said, that the enmities between near relations are the most deadly, because of the close collision into which they are brought, and thence, I believe, their jealousies are the greater also. I am not alluding now to the nearest and dearest ties, though I have seen mothers jealous of their daughters, fathers jealous of their sons, uncles of their nephews, aunts of their neices, and brothers and sisters of each other; but I allude to the competition which exists, unconsciously to themselves perhaps, between branches of the same family and its more distant members, such as cousins of different degrees of parenty; and if any *celebrity* be grafted in one of the branches, the jealousy of the others shows itself often in detracting observations. In brothers and sisters, in a few instances, however, I have observed a contrary tendency, and a more *amiable* modification of *self-love*, for I have known them idolize, and flatter each other to such an extent, self-love blowing the flame of natural affection to such a pernicious height, that with a sort of exclusiveness and royalty of pretension, the only competition which they could admit for these

idols of their heart was, with the paragons of all ages and countries, and they were ready to assert the right of their nearest of kin, to be not only the most lovely and graceful of their species, but "the wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best."

But much oftener I have been disappointed at finding my commendations of one part of a family, received by another part of it with striking coldness, and lowering remarks made upon those, who ought to have been to the speakers sources of gratification, as well as objects of affection: but the detractors probably wished to be the *first* in importance in their own families, and were painfully alive to the sense of having failed in a competition, which, till they were *outdone*, they were not *conscious* of having *felt*.

The same aversion to acknowledge superiority in those with whom the allotments of life oblige us to associate, occasions the coldness with which the fame, literary or otherwise, of their old and intimate friends is received by persons in general. It is the voice of strangers, and never of associates, that confers distinction on the fearful pretender to public notice.

How often have those compositions, which, when shown to the eye of friendship in manuscript, have met with the warmest encomium, been beheld by the same persons with indifference or contempt, and even not read at all, when they have been submitted to the public eye, and received with marked approbation. And to what can this be imputed, but to a feeling of jealousy, however veiled by self-love and other circumstances, from the consciousness of the persons actuated by it? We are all fond of patronising, and we are willing to praise where our praise bestows distinction and excites gratitude. We have no aversion to see others enjoy a degree of celebrity, if it be derived from our commendations and notice, but when those who have first been raised into reputation by our encomiums become independent of us, and are distin-

guished by an admiring world, we have a mean pleasure in withholding that tribute from them in their *celebrity*, which we were willing to give them in their obscurity, are ready to retract our opinion of their talents, and apt to listen to their praises in painful silence, or reply to them with criticism, the most severe, if not the most unjust.

The pride of nature shrinks from owning for superiors, those who have hitherto been our inferiors only or our equals. Few persons can bear to suppose that their intimate companions are of more consequence than they themselves are, even for powers which they are not desirous of possessing, and they envy the fame which is the result of certain talents, though they do not envy the talents themselves.

The following well-known anecdote from Plutarch will not be irrelevant here.

"At the time that Aristides was banished, when the people were inscribing the names on the shells, it is reported that an illiterate burgher came to Aristides, whom he took for an ordinary person, and giving him his shell, desired him to write Aristides upon it. The good man, surprised at the adventure, asked him whether Aristides had ever injured him. No, said he, nor do I even know him, but it vexes me to hear him everywhere *called the Just.*" Now this Athenian was in no sort of *particular* rivalship with that great and virtuous man, but he hated him for his superiority and good name; and such is the obliquity of human nature, that I fully believe, a degree of the feeling that actuated this Athenian, is often awakened amongst us by the successes and the reputation of our associates and friends. I beg leave to indulge myself by telling the rest of this anecdote. Aristides made no answer but took the shell, and having written his own name on it returned it to the man, and when he quitted Athens, this *Christian Heathen* lifted up his hands towards heaven, and prayed for his enemies; prayed that the people of Athens might

never see the day which should force them to remember Aristides.

The following extract, from the nineteenth number of the Spectator, on *Envy*, particularly on the envy which a successful author excites, will I trust amuse my readers.

"But keeping in the common road of life, I shall consider the envious man with relation to these three heads, his pains, his reliefs, and his happiness. The envious man is in pain on all occasions which ought to give him pleasure. The relish of his life is inverted; and the objects which administer the highest satisfaction to those who are exempt from this passion, gives the quickest pangs to persons who are subject to it: all the perfections of their fellow-creatures are odious. Youth, beauty, valor and wisdom, are provocations of their displeasure. What a wretched and apostate state is this! to be offended with excellence, and to hate a man because we approve him! The condition of the envious man is the most emphatically miserable; he is not only incapable of rejoicing at another's merit or success, but lives in a world where all mankind are in a plot against his quiet by studying their own happiness and advantage. Will Prosper is an honest tale-bearer, he makes it his business to join in conversation with envious men. He points to such a handsome young fellow, and whispers that he is secretly married to a great fortune; when they doubt, he adds circumstances to prove it, and never fails to aggravate their distress by assuring them that to his knowledge he has an uncle who will leave him some thousands.

"Will has many arts of this kind to torture this sort of a temper, and delights in it. When he finds them change color, and say faintly they wish such a piece of news is true, he has the malice to speak some good or other of every man of their acquaintance.

"The *reliefs* of the envious man are those little

blemishes and imperfections that discover themselves in an illustrious character.

"It is a matter of great consolation to an envious person, when a man of known honor does a thing unworthy of himself, or when any action, which was well executed, upon better information appears so altered in its circumstances, that the fame of it is divided among many, instead of being attributed to one. This is a secret satisfaction to these malignants; for the person whom they before could not but admire, they fancy is nearer their own condition, as soon as his merit is shared among others.

"I remember some years ago there came out an excellent poem without the name of the author. The little wits, who were incapable of writing it, began to pull in pieces the supposed writer. When that would not do, they took great pains to suppress the opinion that it was his. That again failed. The next refuge was to say it was overlooked by one man and many pages written wholly by another. An honest fellow, who sat among a cluster of them in debate on this subject, cried out, 'gentlemen, if you are sure none of you yourselves had a hand in it, you are but where you were, whoever writ it.' But the most usual succor to the envious, in cases of nameless merit in this kind is to keep the property, if possible, unfixed, and by that means to hinder the reputation of it from falling on any particular person. You see an envious man clear up his countenance, if, in the relation of any man's great happiness in one point, you mention his uneasiness in another. When he hears such a one is very rich, he turns pale; but recovers when you add that he has many children. In a word, the only sure way to an envious man's favor is, not to deserve it. But if we consider the envious man in delight, it is like reading of the seat of a giant in a romance; the magnificence of this house consists in the many limbs of men whom he has slain. If any who promised themselves success in any uncommon undertaking, miscarry in the attempt, or he that aimed at

what would have been useful and laudable, meets with contempt and derision, the envious man, under the color of hating vain glory, can smile with an inward wantonness of heart at the ill effect it may have upon an honest ambition for the future.

"Having thoroughly considered the nature of this passion, I have made it my study how to avoid the envy that may accrue to me from these my speculations; and if I am not mistaken in myself, I think I have a genius to escape it. Upon hearing, in a coffee-house, one of my papers commended, I immediately apprehended the envy that would spring from that applause; and therefore gave a description of my face the next day; being resolved, as I grow in reputation for wit, to resign my pretensions to beauty. This, I hope, may give some ease to those unhappy gentlemen, who do me the honor to torment themselves upon the account of this my paper. As their case is very deplorable, and deserves compassion, I shall sometimes be dull, in pity to them, and will from time to time, administer consolations to them by further discoveries of my person. In the meanwhile, if any one says the Spectator has wit, it may be some relief to them to think that he does not show it in company. And if any one praises his morality, they may comfort themselves by considering, that his face is none of the longest."

I believe competition is never so dangerous as when it is between married people, and I have always admired the wisdom of those husbands and wives who never venture to play chess together. But, if the collision of ability in a simple game of chess be replete with danger to wedded harmony, how much more so the competitions of authorship! and while I presume to advise authors and authoresses not to marry each other, I give the following extract from Dr. Young's Universal Passion, to strengthen my advice.

"But not in shades the Muses smile alone,
Their sacred force Amelia feels in town;
* * * * * * * *

Nought but a genius can a genius fit,
A wit herself, Amelia weds a wit.
'Tis said that miracles will never cease;
Three days, three wondrous days they liv'd in peace,
On the fourth morn a warm dispute arose
On Durfey's poetry and Bunyan's prose;
The learned war both wage with equal force,
And the fifth morn concluded the divorce."

I have asserted in a preceding page, that some persons, from a feeling of jealous competition, undervalue and speak loweringly of the merit and ability of their relations; while the failing of others is to praise and overrate every one that belongs to them. The following anecdote illustrates these contrasted operations of self-love in a peculiar degree. "I was sitting one morning with a lady, (said a friend of mine) who was remarkable for speaking of her relatives in a lessening and complaining manner, and to whom their praises were evidently unpalatable; so much so, that I had long ceased to commend them in her presence, and I attributed this weakness to a sore self-love which brought itself forward in competition, where no one else could see any ground for it. Soon after I was seated, another visiter came in, and thinking herself privileged to find fault with the lady's relations, even in her presence, as she had heard her speak ill of them herself, she talked of them in very lowering terms, while I sat in uneasy silence, disgusted at the coarse daring of the detractor, and dreading to hear the person addressed join in the detraction. But, on the contrary, she not only eagerly defended the accused, but lavished on them the kindest encomiums, and showed such just indignation at the severity of the detractor, that she was glad to shorten her visit." "How I have enjoyed the correction which you gave that rude woman! (said I, when she was gone) and I am glad to find that your opinion of those whom she censured, is so happily changed." "It is not changed at all," she bluntly

replied; "I think just as ill of them as ever, but no one shall presume to find fault with my relations in my presence: I think it is taking a great liberty with me; it is an affront to my dignity; for however ill I may think of my relatives, no one has any right to abuse them in my hearing, and I shall defend them to the utmost." O! poor human nature! thought I, when I heard this anecdote. Here was self-love at its climax; this person was induced to violate, unblushingly, what she believed to be the truth, and commend those to whom she thought no commendation was due, not from the amiable impulse of natural affection, but from the sordid impulse of self-love! the influence, as I may call it, of the pronoun possessive, "my and mine."

Having thus alluded to the pronoun possessive and its influence, I beg leave to digress and say here what I had once intended to say on this subject in a publication by itself.

I shall now recapitulate what has been said in this chapter.

That the competition between party-giving ladies of all ranks in a metropolis is well known,—that even there, the bitterness of the rivalry depends on the closeness of the competition.

That competitions in dress, style of living, and dinner-giving, are probably greatest in a country town.

That competitions in a public ball-room, or wherever rival talents are displayed, have a hurtful tendency.

That competitions amongst near relations, from the closeness of the collision, excite the greatest detraction.

That competitions in chess-playing, or talents of any kind, between husbands and wives, are dangerous to connubial happiness.

And lastly, as a digression growing out of the subject, I express my intention to make some observations on the influence of the pronoun possessive.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE PRONOUN POSSESSIVE.

THERE is no pronoun, except it be the pronoun personal, that is so fond of going into company and playing the first fiddle there as the pronoun possessive. The latter is as omnipotent as any fairy of old, for it has a transforming power, against which we cannot be too much on our guard, since it sometimes throws over every person and every thing that belongs to us, a lustre which may be mere delusion, like the mirage on the sea shore. That "I" is a hero, we have long known, from good authority, "and I the little hero of each tale," says the poet of good sense; but then I must consider *my* or *mine* as a hero also; nay, I must own that I feel his influence so much, and he forces himself so continually into my conversation, against my sense of propriety, that, in revenge, I have resolved to hold him and his daring up to public reprehension. It is in vain that I say to myself, why should I talk of myself? Who cares about my symptoms, my invitations, or my acquaintances, my works, or my plans, or any thing belonging to me, or whether my relatives or friends be sick, or well, alive, or dead, *promoted* or *transported?* Yet, that tyrant *my* is always forcing me to talk of somebody or something belonging to myself, and probably of no interest whatever to any one who hears me!

But though this egotism, or rather meumism is dangerous, so far as it may make me laughed at, and lead others into the snare of laughing at me as soon as my back is turned, or even before; (and it is no new thing to me, to be laughed at in my

presence,) this is not the most dangerous part of the influence of the pronoun possessive; it is most dangerous when it blinds us to the defects of all who belong to us; when it elevates their charms, talents, and virtues, to a height pernicious both to us and to themselves, by feeding our self-consequence and theirs also, filling us with a degree of family arrogance fatal to the character of a humble Christian; yet, who that have ever looked into themselves, or ever regarded others with observing eyes, but must be sensible of the power of the pronoun *my* and *mine*, in little as well as great things, and will not own that the following fable, written by that accurate judge of nature, Æsop, one of the earliest friends of youth, is a faithful picture of the delusions of self-love, and of the *pronoun possessive*?

THE EAGLE AND THE OWL.

The Owl and Eagle once were apt to quarrel;
But, wiser grown, they long'd for peace.
I know not which of them obtain'd most laurel;
But, as both thought that war had better cease,
The one on a king's honor swore,
And by an owl's the other,
That they, sweet peaceful souls,
Would, from that moment, ever more,
All sparks of former hatred smother;
And ne'er, though hungry, kill and eat
Each other's little ones, however sweet,
But let the eaglets live, and tiny owls.

But, in the head of wisdom's bird,
Popt this sage question—"Though thy word,
Dear friend, I doubt not, fain I'd learn
(And thou the reason wilt discern)
Whether the race of owls, and most my own,
To thee are personally known."
"No!" cried the Eagle, "none ere met my sight."
"Then," cried the mother, in a fright,
"For my sweet little ones I tremble!"

"Why so, dear friend?" the Eagle said,
"Suppress this foolish dread;
Tell me what owlets most resemble;
Describe them so as I may know them,
(Thy own especially) and I'll forego them.
Nay! may I from my throne be hurl'd,
If I would kill thy dears for all the world!"
The owl bow'd low, and on her heart
Her claw in gratitude she laid;
And then, with fond, deceptive art,
Her young ones thus portray'd—
"My dears are always small, well made, and beautiful,
All other owls above, as well as dutiful,
Thou, by their beauty, wilt at once
Know them for owls, and wilt be sure they're mine,
Therefore thou wilt to spare them all incline,
Nor on their lovely forms destroying pounce."

The Eagle then repeated to himself,
(Not knowing she for Dresden took her Delf)
"Small, beautiful, well made!
O! without further aid,
I now must know them, and if e'er I meet them,
As I'm a gentleman, I will not eat them."
"Thanks!" cried the Owl, and bade good bye,
While her friend soar'd along the sky;
And she into a hole retir'd
Within a moss-crown'd rock; and there,
Ere many days expir'd,
She gave the owlet darlings birth,
Sweet objects of her tender care,
Whom, ere they graced the earth,
She bade her dread ally, the Eagle spare.
And he, in truth, of noble nature,
Would have rejoic'd to spare each owlet creature,
Had not the weakly partial owl,
Quite blinded by the strong control
Of MY and MINE, the *pronoun* call'd POSSESSIVE,
Describ'd her ugly race as fraught with every grace,
And fam'd indeed for beauty e'en *excessive*.

But this maternal and too common blindness
Made vain the royal bird's intended kindness;—

For when, one luckless day,
Upon his sounding wings
He sought for prey
Within the hole upon the rock,
And spy'd some wry-nosed, croaking things,
Big-eyed and hideous,
And with heads so prodigious,
They gave his feelings quite a shock,
He could not think he saw those birds so *pretty*,
Whom he was taught to admire as well as pity;
"No, no," said he,
"These cannot be
The owlets I was ask'd to spare;
These monsters, and not beauties, are;
And, with their ugliness o'erpower'd,
I think them only fit to be devour'd;
So, *sans façon*, I shall upon them sup;"
Then, in a trice, they all were eaten up!
When the too partial owl return'd,
And found the nest bereft;
And, of the forms she left,
Nought but the bony feet remaining,
O! loud indeed was her complaining;
And like another Niobe she mourn'd.

Then to the gods the sufferer went,
In hopes Minerva, her protector,
Would in her sorrows not neglect her;
But bring to punishment condign,
The false destroyer of the owlet line.
"No!" cried Minerva, "I'm too just for that;
Thou hast to blame thyself,
Vain-glorious elf!
For thy poor owlets' most untimely fate;
Thou bad'st the royal bird expect to find
In them the brightest of the feather'd kind,
And when he monsters saw, instead of beauties,
(As he declares in self-defence,)
How, in the name of common sense,
Could he believe he saw thy dears?
Therefore, with no misgiving fears,
He thought it one of his first duties
To put an end to such a frightful race.

Know then, poor injured one, though hard's thy case,
'Twas not the royal bird's unkindness
That kill'd thy darlings, but their mother's blindness.
Before thy partial sight
They seem'd so fair and bright,
Merely because they offspring were of thine.
The loss thou'rt doom'd to moan
Was caus'd by the resistless sway
Of that imperial pronoun,
Which all the vain obey:
Henceforth, be on thy guard 'gainst MY and MINE."

CHAPTER V.

THE SUBJECT RESUMED.

I SHALL now return to my subject. As competition is always great, as I have said before, in proportion to its closeness, contemporaries, that is, those who are of the same age and standing in society, come into the most *immediate* competition, and are therefore likely to yield to the temptations consequent on rivalry. I have often heard both men and women, who have readily admitted the worldly prosperity, the charms, the talents, and virtues, of those who were *avowedly* older or younger than themselves, speak doubtfully of the asserted pretensions of their immediate contemporaries; and if it is remarked that they are very young looking for their age, the respondents have hesitatingly said, "Do you think so? I cannot say I am of that opinion;" adding, "No, I think they look full as old as they are. Let me see! we were at school together, and I know I was at least by two or three years the youngest."

There is also an obvious jealousy amongst persons of talent and acquirement residing in a country town. Those who are accustomed to be the oracles of their own circle, "bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne," (though there are sometimes honorable exceptions to this general rule,) and are apt to judge with harshness, and deny the claims of any new competition for listeners and admirers. But, with what severity, and even contempt, do men and women, who pique themselves on their reasoning faculties and powers of argumentative conversation, regard those amongst their acquaintance, whose talents are of a different na-

ture, especially if the exertion of their talents has given them any reputation in the world, while they are unconscious, probably, that their low estimation of the merit of their associates is caused by a feeling of rivalry—"How can that be?" they might indignantly exclaim, "our abilities are not of the same kind." No, but in the narrow circle in which they meet, they are competing for notice, admiration, and importance, and much of Dr. Goldsmith's feeling, mentioned in the preceding pages, is at work in them; they, therefore, are under the influence of *particular* competition. "Two of a trade cannot agree," says the proverb; but it is equally true, though not generally felt, and therefore not sufficiently *guarded against*, that we are as liable to feel envy and jealousy of those whose abilities are wholly different to our own, as of those who possess the same gifts as ourselves; only in this latter case the jealousy is stronger and conscious, in the other it is often unconscious; but, unconscious it would not continue to be, if we were all in the salutary habit of ferreting out our secret motives, and could bear to contemplate "that ugly thing, a naked human heart."

Competition for the attribute called feeling or sensibility, leads as constantly to ungenerous detraction as any other. This is a quality which all persons arrogate to *themselves*, but rarely allow their relatives, friends, or acquaintances, to possess in an equal degree.

How common are the following observations: "Yes—she is a worthy woman, but I am sure she has but very *little feeling*;" and "Yes! I dare say he is a good man, but his *sensibility* will never hurt him." "How differently I should have behaved or felt under such circumstances." Here the detraction is evidently the result of the speaker's entering into competition with the party spoken of on the score of feeling. And this is an *openly avowed* species of competitionship. Yet surely, there is as much vanity displayed by the assumption of supe-

rior sensibility, as if one declared one's belief of being wiser or handsomer than one's neighbors; and to assert our superiority in any thing is a proof of self-conceit; still there is an injustice commonly committed, on which I must observe, namely, that of considering persons of literary gifts and attainments as more vain and conceited than any other description of persons. But is this censure just? I will put this case. If an author were to talk of his own works in company, and speak of them and their usefulness with high commendation, he would deserve to be called offensively vain; but suppose another gentleman present should say, how shocked he had been at such a person's want of feeling, adding, "how differently I should have behaved under such a trial, but then, few persons feel actually as I do!" would it not be very unfair to say the author was more vain than he was? the objects of their vanity were certainly different, but its *degree* the *same*. Again, suppose an authoress were to commend her own writings while with a party of friends, and boast of her own superiority, and that another lady should soon after depreciate the notability and domestic knowledge of some woman of her acquaintance, and describe her own superior cleverness in all domestic arrangements, asserting what a *manager*, what a *nurse*, what a *physician* also, she was upon occasions! more than insinuating that she was a paragon of perfection, in what, I admit, is the best knowledge of woman. I beg leave to ask whether, in such a case, the company present would be justified in saying that the authoress was the vainer of the two, and that the vanity of authors and authoresses was of the superlative degree; and whether truth would not demand, that the man of assumed superior feeling, and the woman of assumed superior notability, were not quite as conceited as the author and authoress; and yet it is probable, that the company present would *only* be conscious of the vanity of the two latter, and that the two former would be the first to ridicule

the excessive conceit of their literary associates. Yet, vanity is vanity, and conceit, conceit, whatever be the subject on which they are displayed: and whatever those persons are who assert their own superiority, they should be careful to speak with forbearance of the conceit attendant on *authorship*.

But to resume my subject. Many persons mischievously mistake *irritability* for *sensibility*, and impute actions and sufferings to *feeling*, which in reality are the results of ill-governed temper. I define irritability to be an excess of *self*-love and sensibility of *social* love. I have heard those whose peace of mind is often disturbed by their unhappy temper, assert that all good humored persons are without sensibility, and that where good temper abounds, the feelings are comparatively blunt: thus blinded by self-love, they impute to excess of *good* feeling, what is, really, the consequence of want of religious or moral restraint; and instead of endeavoring to see themselves as they are, they impute to defect the charm admired in others—therefore, as their vanity leads them to consider their fault as a proof of superior virtue, they have not the necessary stimulus to conquer their besetting sin. Irritability is often occasioned by weak nerves and bodily infirmity: but whatever be its cause, it frequently leads into detracting observations; and there is nothing that excites uncandid judgment more, nor is a want of sober-mindedness ever more conspicuous than in the estimate which we form of the degree of affliction exhibited by mourners. When we visit the afflicted in the first days of their distress, their apparent degree of misery rarely equals our expectation, but if they are as much subdued at *first* as we suspected, still they usually recover their spirits before they have our permission; and with no small complacency, we compare their rapidly-recovered cheerfulness, with what we believe would have been our *protracted sufferings*. We observe, "it is amazing how soon

Mr. or Mrs., or William or Mary such a one, has recovered his or her bereavement! and how happy it is for some folks that they do not feel such things as others do." The robber, Procrustes, used to tie the travellers whom he conquered on a bed, and if their length exceeded it, he caused their limbs to be cut off till they were of the just dimensions; and if they were shorter, he had them stretched till they reached its uttermost point. A similar sort of tyranny is exercised by observers on the afflicted. Mourners must express their sorrow exactly as the observers do; their grief must be of the same dimensions, or they cannot believe them to be mourners at all. One says, "I called such a day on our friend so and so, and I was surprised to find him or her so well! He (or she) never once alluded to the deceased! almost forgotten already, I dare say." Another says, "I saw our friend such an one yesterday, and it was surprising how incessantly he or she talked of the departed, and of the affliction and so on. For my part, I never can talk of those I have lost, nor do I believe, that those who feel a loss acutely *ever can*. No, no, such persons are never *really afflicted*." Thus in the *one* case, no allusion to the death or the dead is looked upon as an evidence of want of proper feeling, and forgetfulness of the bereavement; and in the *other* the garrulity of grief is considered as a proof of its non-existence or non-durability. But, in both these cases, the judgment was equally unkind, uncandid, and *erroneous*. The late Henry Fuseli, speaking of the head of Buonaparte exclaimed in my presence, "O! there is no duplicate of that head in the world!" but added immediately, "but, then to be sure, there is no exact duplicate of any head and face whatever!" I was struck with the observation at the time and never forgot it; for it appeared to me applicable to moral qualities and feelings, as well as to faces and heads, particularly in appreciating the sensibility of others. I have convinced myself that no two persons feel the same thing

alike; and if there be no duplicate of any head or face, neither is there one of any mind, heart, or sensibility; consequently all persons have a *way of their own* of expressing what they feel, a different way of venting their grief, and of comforting themselves under it; and it would be as narrow, invidious and presuming, for any one to say, that those who do not express, or conceal their grief as we do, are our inferiors in proper feeling, as it would be to assume that the weather could not be warm because we felt it cold, or that no one could think red and yellow, fine colors, because they were in our eyes ugly and gaudy. I believe that there are as many diversities of grief as of dress, as many shades of sorrow as of color, and the great Physician has mercifully furnished as many remedies for affliction as for diseases. But detractors know not this. Unsubdued by "*the venerable presence of misery*"—misery, which if silent they *distrust*, and if garrulous they distrust still more: they visit it not to *sympathize* but to *judge*, and to compare their own superior sensibility, with the supposed want of it in the object before them; thus converting the cypress of the bereaved into an ornament for their own vanity, and blessing themselves, like the pharisee of old, that they are "not as other men are."

I must here insert another proof of the natural love of distinction, and the common tendency to competition, however *unconsciously* felt:—namely, that many are jealous, even of superiority in the trials of life, and I have been interrupted while expatiating on the sorrows and bereavements of some of my friends, by this exclamation from another, "Oh! what are their trials to some I could mention; they ought to be thankful it is no worse. *Other* people, as *I bitterly feel*, have had much more to undergo." And in *physical* inflictions I have seen the same desire of being supreme in suffering, and have heard the sufferer exclaim with obvious and *strange* self-complacency: "Oh! but

what are their pains and agonies to mine!" and if this supposed supremacy of trial was not attended with murmuring and want of proper resignation to the divine will, one cannot be disposed to grudge the victims of pain, the apparent comfort derived from this innocent competition.

CHAPTER VI.

ON PRECEDENCE, &c.

I COME now to an important and universal species of competition. Important, I may indeed with propriety denominate it; namely, that of *precedence*. Who that has ever read the history of our own country, or that of others, but must be well aware, that a disregard of the right of an ambassador's precedence, or a denial of his claims, has sometimes involved kingdoms in war, and deluged the world with blood; affording one of the most melancholy as well as most convincing proofs of that *pride of heart*, disguised under the name of rights of nations, which is odious in the sight of him who is the "King of kings," and of whom it is said, that "he casteth down the mighty from their seats, and exalteth the humble and meek." But I shall confine myself to observations on the pernicious effect of this sort of competition on the well-being of private life, and the heart-burnings, the jealousies, and the consequent *detraction*, which it is so apt to produce. Even amongst those whose rights are recorded in in the Table of Precedence, there is a possibility of dangerous mistakes, for though the most ignorant giver of a dinner knows that dukes and dutchesses walk before marquisses and marchionesses, and so on down the list, still it requires some knowledge of heraldry to remember the intricate distinctions of the degrees of precedence amongst their children. I remember the pain experienced by a good-natured man of my acquaintance, on finding he had wounded the pride and feelings of two noble ladies, by leading out before them the lady of a baronet. But, to my friend, a lady *was a lady*, and to be hon

ored, as he supposed, before the other pretenders, who were simple mistresses, though honorable preceded their names; and in confiding ignorance he led the *dame* down to dinner before them, little dreaming of "to-morrow's fate." But, the next day, the mother of one of the ladies desired to speak to him; and, with no little eagerness, though with the manner of a true gentlewoman, reproached him for the affront which he had passed upon the Honorable Mrs. A——; the distressed host anxiously desired to know how he had offended; when, to his great surprise, as well as dismay, he learned that it was by giving a baronet's lady the precedence of the wife of the younger son of an English earl! My poor friend could not deny the charge; but he apologized, promised to do so no more, and also promised, that when in the ensuing week, Mrs. A. honored him with her presence to nearly the same party, he would take care to let her precede every one else; and the good lady retired well pleased at having thus asserted the rights of her daughter. But my friend had made a rash promise, for he had not consulted Blackstone. Scarcely was this reprover gone, when he was told that Colonel B—— wanted to see him on particular business. My friend welcomed him with his usual urbanity, but the Colonel was rather distant in his behavior, and told him that he called to require an explanation of the extraordinary disregard of the rights of a noble lady, which had been shown by him the preceding day. "O! dear Colonel," replied the relieved offender, "Mrs. —— has just been here, has just shown me my *error*, the result of ignorance only; I have apologized, and when I have the honor of seeing you all at a supper party here next week, I have promised to give the precedence to the Honorable Mrs. A——." "To the Honorable Mrs. A——," exclaimed the Colonel, in an angry tone; "what! in utter contempt of the rights of my wife!" My poor friend was thunderstruck; and with difficulty faltered out, "but, Sir, I th[illegible]

the lady of an earl's younger son's wife"—"Fiddlestick's end! for an earl's younger son's wife, Sir!" cried the indignant Colonel; "my wife is the eldest daughter of an English viscount, and what says Blackstone, vol. i. p. 405?" "I don't know, I never read Blackstone." "The more shame for you, Sir; well, in his Table of Precedence, he says, that 'a viscount's eldest son ranks before an earl's younger son, and that the daughters of noble families always rank with their *eldest brother*.'" "Does he, indeed, Sir?" exclaimed my friend; "well, Colonel, and what then?" "What then, Sir? why the Honorable Mrs. B—— must take the place every where of the Honorable Mrs. A——; and if you again disregard her just rights, into your house, Sir, she shall never enter more." So saying, he strutted out of the room, leaving my friend convinced of the necessity of studying Blackstone in future, before he invited to his house the noble and the privileged. But it is not amongst those who know their own privileges to be ascertained beyond a doubt, that one sees the greatest tenaciousness of precedence. It is where rights are dubious, that withholding what we imagine our due, wounds our self-love and lowers our consequence, and that granting it is a pleasing tribute to our pride. It is no favor done to a lady of high rank to give her the precedence; she knows her right and takes it, and no new feeling of gratified pride is excited in her; the most obvious and uneasy clinging to precedence exists, where there is no real right to it, and where an appeal to Blackstone would be vain, because the social existence of the appellants is not *named there*. I mean amongst that numerous class in society, whose consequence is chiely derived from the fulness of their purses; and I have often observed the pain with which the wives of opulent men in business have been forced to give precedence to the poor daughter of a baronet or a knight. How often have I heard this empty and only privilege grudged to its possessor, and her pride and

presumption in accepting it, censured with an unsparing tongue!—competition, undoubtedly, in this instance, prompting to the unkind, and I may say unjust, detraction. How often have I found on inquiry, when I have heard persons of dubious rights to precedence speaking with severity of the master of the house, where I knew that they had recently been visiting, that he had given precedence of the severe observer to some neighbor, friend, or relative; unsuccessful competition being, in this instance, again, the direct and undoubted source of detraction.

The master of a house gives no proof of his superior respect for his noble guests, when he gives them the precedence due to their rank; he only shows his knowledge of the red book, only acts according to heraldric rule. But where the right of going first depends, as it sometimes does, on the dinner-giver's own impression of the consequence and standing in society of the guest whom he selects, then the self-love is called into action, and is gratified, no doubt, in the person so preferred, and wounded, no doubt, in those who believe they had better right to the distinction. By universal consent, married women and married men take place of single ones; and no one, who is not ignorant of the common laws of good society, would lead the daughter of a merely rich man out of the room, before the wife even of a poor man; and decided seniority in age is a just right of precedence. But, if the general wish of claiming that *empty* distinction, which undefined precedence *really is*, must continue to exist, and exist it will while pride of heart remains, that common sin of unregenerated nature, it were desirable that there should be certain laws drawn up for the regulation of precedence, in comparatively private society; and that the untitled, whose place is not pointed out in Blackstone, should have a table of precedence of their own. In this table I should like to see places awarded to the stranger, to the oldest; the next place to the mar-

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ried, according to their imputed age; but I am afraid precedence granted on this supposition would occasion even more heart-burnings than the present mode; and that when place is accorded to age, it must be given on that plea to those only to whom the epithet of old has long ceased to be an appalling sound.

But let me not speak lightly on a subject which should be treated with serious consideration. It might be beneficial, perhaps, to ask ourselves, and those whose rights are not defined, whence proceeds our tenaciousness of precedence?

Is it necessary to our peace to have it proved, as far as the circumstance of our preceding others can prove it, that we are of more consequence than the friends by whom we are surrounded? if so, and they be as jealous of respect as we are, it will not be likely to endear the meeting to them, and cannot excite in them that kind expansion of heart and mind towards all present, which can alone make any part delightful. But where acknowledged precedence is awarded to those advanced in years, or to the *stranger*, no wound is given, even to the sorest self-love, as no one desires to compete with any one in age, and the claims of the stranger cannot come in any painful collision with our own. But in what way and for what are we desirous that the precedence should be given us? Is it to raise us in our own estimation? That would be unnecessary, for no doubt we are too high in that already. Is it to raise us in the estimation of others? That also would be unnecessary, if our right to precede were properly founded; for if such right were built on superior respectability of character, and qualities of mind or heart, the trumpery distinction of our being called on to go first, or the trumpery circumstance of our being improperly permitted to go last, would not, could not, alter our real claim to distinction.

In short; the jealousy of place is a feeling to be struggled with as wholly at variance with that

lowliness of heart which is becoming the sincere Christian. Our great poet, in his Paradise Lost, has made the love of supremacy, of which precedency claimed and given is certainly a part, a distinguishing trait in the character of satan; he puts the following characteristic words in his mouth:—

"Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven,"

and whenever I hear of men or women, who evidently prefer association with their inferiors to the society of their superiors or equals, I am forcibly reminded of this line; and I believe that the same sort of characteristic pride, which it so aptly expresses, is at work in those individuals.

A foreigner complained to me the other day of having had the right which he claimed of leading a lady out, rudely wrested from him; adding with great energy, "and is this your boasted hospitality? Is this your kindness to the stranger? In my country strangers take the place of every one, even of the noble; but when you invite a stranger to your plentiful board, by mortifying his pride and wounding his feelings, you take away from him all appetite to eat." And I doubt not but many persons, not foreigners, are daily feeling the same mortification from a sense of unadmitted right to precedence, though self-control and policy have prevented them from expressing it, which converts them from conversible into silent guests, and from benevolent observers of the table and the company, into uncandid and satirical ones; and where is the remedy?

The case is, probably, of frequent occurrence; and, as laws of precedence, except amongst the titled, are arbitrary and undefined, it must remain so. The only resource then, is humbly to endeavor to annihilate that unchristian pride, which leads us weakly to desire precedence, and still more weakly to resent its being withheld. There are some persons, probably, who have a pleasure in mortifying

the supposed pride of others, or think it their duty to do so, by denying even their just pretensions; and there are some who will do it from mere *ignorance* and carelessness. But those who have taught themselves to look upon such distinctions with a humble and Christian eye, will be able to meet with equal indifference, intended and unintended neglect. If distinction be given they will receive it without being elated, and if withheld they will not sink into sullen and indignant silence; but will on the contrary endeavor to give distinction to the lower seat awarded to them, by cheering their neighbors by their pleasant conversation.

I was led to make the foregoing observation by recollecting an anecdote of a Spanish nobleman, which is much to the point in question, and with which I shall finish my discussion on precedence.

This gentleman invited a poor but honest farmer to dinner, and when they were ready to sit down, the master of the house insisted that the farmer should place himself at the head of the table; but he obstinately refused; the other persevered, saying he ought to command in his own house; but the countryman piquing himself on his imagined civility and good breeding, still persisted in not sitting down, till the gentleman laying both his hands on his shoulders forced him to sit, saying, "sit thee down, chaff-threshing churl! for let me sit where I will, that is the upper end to thee;"—and I would advise those who are not disposed to consider pride as a sin, but on the contrary as akin to a virtue, and therefore cling with tenacity to the rights of precedence, to console themselves, when those rights are neglected or denied, with the remembrance of this anecdote, and reflect that their rank, their merit, and their agreeableness, remain just the same, though they may be forced to follow those whom they ought to precede, and instead of sullen looks and silent tongue, let them endeavor to prove themselves, if not the first in consequence, fore-

most in what is better far, agreeableness and good humor, qualities which no red book can give, and no human power can take away.

I must beg leave to add that the gospel enjoins us always to choose the *lowest places*, and none could be jealous of precedency, who remembered and were influenced by the following injunction: "But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room."

I shall now recapitulate what has been said in this chapter.

That precedence is one of the most important of competitions, as the denial of the claims of an ambassador to precedence has sometimes deluged nations with blood.

That in private life this sort of competition excites many heart-burnings, and leads to envy and detraction.

That the rights even of the priviledged orders, it is sometimes difficult to ascertain, without a knowledge of Blackstone; and this is illustrated by an anecdote.

That the greatest tenacity of precedence is evinced by those whose rights to it are dubious, and whose claims (those of the merely rich for instance,) are not acknowledged in Blackstone.

That it were desirable for rules of precedence to be drawn up, to regulate the claims of those whose rights are not in the red book.

That it is right to give precedence to the stranger, and the oldest in the company.

That abroad, strangers at a party take place even of the noble.

That it would be best to struggle with the desire of precedence, as an unchristian feeling.

That it would be wisest to endeavor to be indifferent to going first or last, and try, wherever we sit, to make our part of the table the most attractive, be it low or high, by the pleasantness

of our conversation—a charm no red book can give or take away.

That the anecdote which I give is applicable to the subject.

Lastly, that it were well to remember the sacred injunction, to go, when bidden to a feast, unto the lowest room.

CHAPTER VII.

ON RELIGIOUS COMPETITION.

HAVING laid it down as a general principle, that the feeling of competition is common to every one, and that its results are envy and detraction, it must be my firm belief that even that class of my fellow-christians, who are teachers of the word, cannot be wholly exempted from the dangers incident to it; but in them, such feelings, I trust, are in some measure subdued, as soon as they are aware of their existence; and how can a humble, serious Christian, who performs the duty of *self-examination*, and brings before his mind every night not only the actions but the *feelings* which he has experienced during the day, in order to supplicate pardon, if they have been sinful, and to return thanks, if they have been pure, how can such a man have a feeling of jealous competition without being conscious of it? But, as he knows his *disease*, he also knows his *remedy*.

I have been encouraged to make these remarks, by perusing a sensible and useful work, called "Christian Fellowship, or the Church Member's Guide," by J. A. James.

In this work, the language of reproof shows, that certain errors are apt to creep in even amongst the pious. But he shall speak for himself. "It does not unfrequently happen, that where two or more churches of the same denomination exist in a town, a most unhappy, unscriptural, and disgraceful temper is manifested towards each other. All the feelings of envy, jealousy, and ill-will, are cherished and displayed with as much or more bitterness, than

two rival tradesmen would exhibit in the most determined opposition of interests."

Again he says: "Let us not look with envy and jealousy on the growing prosperity of other societies. Let us not consider their success as in any degree encroaching upon ours. If we succeed more in our own church, let us be thankful but not boastful; if others take precedence, let us be stirred up to affectionate, holy emulation, but not to envy and jealousy." "Shall we feel mortified when immortal souls are saved, because we were not the instruments of their conversion? Shall we say, if we cannot gather them into the church, let them not be gathered? If two rival physicians, who had each as much as he could do, when the plague was raging in a town, looked with envy and grudging on each other's success, what should we say of their spirit? But such a temper, in these circumstances, is far less criminal than the envious disposition of some ministers and their flocks."

There should be a spirit of mutual affection between the members of different churches; they should live as brethren; and that this might not be disturbed, they should avoid, when they meet in their respective social circles, all invidious and uncharitable reference to the others.

Nothing is more common than for the Christians of one society to make the circumstances and faults of those of another the leading topics of conversation. "Ministers and leading persons in the company should always set their faces against this mischievous gossip. All comparisons between the talents of the ministers and the respectability of their churches should be carefully abstained from." "It is right for every church member to be attached to his own pastor; and he may very innocently think, that his minister is the very best preacher in the town; but it is insulting and mischievous to express his opinion to those who prefer another." I have copied the foregoing extracts with more pleasure, because some of the passages come in aid of

what I have said on the duty of every one to discourage talebearing detraction. This impressive author says, "Ministers and all leading persons in the company should always set their faces against mischievous gossip;" but all gossip is mischievous, and not only ministers, but every one in a company should endeavor to lead the conversation into better things; and I feel assured that this Christian writer would fully agree with me in opinion. He also discourages criticism and comparison of the talents of ministers; and as I intend to hold up this sort of criticism to just reprobation, I feel fresh encouragement to the task, while transcribing the above extracts. I hope that I shall not be deemed presumptuous in having discussed the certain tempations and probable errors of Christian ministers; but I thought I could not avoid alluding to them, as I feel a strong conviction that nothing is more likely to interrupt watchfulness—that "watchfulness unto prayer," so requisite even to the most spiritual of teachers, as a belief that they are raised above the weakness of other men, and that though others may stumble, their footing is secure.

I have entire unity of opinion with the sentiments of the following extract; nevertheless I believe, that though competition is not the only source of detraction, its results are of the most mischievous and most extensive nature, and the envy which it excites is the most dangerous and most incessant. "Others there are who use defamatory discourse, neither for the love of news nor defamation, but purely for love of talk; whose speech, like a flowing current, bears away indiscriminately whatever lies in the way; and, indeed, such incessant talkers are usually people not of depth enough to supply themselves out of their own store, and, therefore, cannot let foreign accession pass by them, no more than the mill, which is always going, can afford any waters to run to waste. I know we use to call this talkativeness a *feminine vice;* but to speak impartially, I think, though we have given them the in-

closure of the scandal, they have not of the fault; and he that shall appropriate loquacity to woman, may, perhaps, sometimes need to light Diogenes' candle to *seek a man;* for it is possible to go into masculine company, where it will be as hard to edge in a word, as at a female gossiping. However, as to this particular of defaming, both the sexes seem to be at a vie, and I think he were a very critical judge, that could determine between them. Now, lest this latter sort of defamers should be apt to absolve themselves as men of harmless intentions, I shall desire them to consider, that they are only more impertinent, not less injurious. For though it be granted, that the proud and envious are to make a distinct account for their pride and envy, yet, as far as relates to their neighbor, they are equally mischievous. Anacreon, that was choked with a grape stone, died as surely as Julius Cæsar, with his three-and-twenty wounds; and a man's reputation may be as well fooled and prattled away as maliciously betrayed. Fame is a tender thing, and seldom is tost and bandied about without receiving some bruise, if not a crack; for reports, we know, like snow-balls, gather still the farther they roll, and when I have once handed it to another, how know I how he may improve it?"

There is another class of zealous Christians and highly commendable to whom, but with great humility, I would recommend constant watchfulness over their own motives and words; because their very virtue may lead them to err, and make them forget awhile the "deceitfulness of the human heart." I mean that extensive class *philanthropists*, those who are trying to do good, both spiritual and moral, in every way, to all their fellow-creatures, who associate and congregate in various public meetings, and also in the closer and therefore more dangerous collision of private committees.

There is great danger that a love of power should creep in on all these occasions, that the controversy of opinions should lead to angry discussion, and

that unsuccessful competition should here, as in other cases, lead to unjust judgment, animosities, backbitings, detraction, and perhaps defamation. I believe it is impossible for any number of persons, men or women, to meet together even for good, without evil being present with them; and Christian purposes do not always ensure the existence and continuance of a Christian spirit. Perhaps this remark may be deemed impertinent, but the experience of others, if not my own, has convinced me that warning is sometimes needed even by the pious, and the benevolent. Though it is not necessary for me to say more, I could not be easy to say less; and I cannot conclude these observations better than by giving the following extract:—"No man can be eminent for purity, or even for moral virtue, but he shall have many invidious eyes upon him, watching for his halting; and if any the least obliquity can be espied, he is used worse than the vilest malefactor; for such are tried but at one bar, and know the utmost of their doom, but these are arraigned at every table, in every tavern, and at such variety of judicatures; there will be as great variety of sentences, only they concur in this one, that he is a *hypocrite*, and then what complacency, what triumph have they in such a discovery. There is not half so much epicurism in any of their more studied luxuries, no spectacle affords them so much pleasure, as a bleeding fame thus laying at their mercy."

I shall conclude this section of my work with another of Æsop's fables.

THE ASS AND THE LAP-DOG.

It is a strong and tenable position,
That, if we speak of man, or beast,
There's scarcely one, or very few at least,
Who does not feel the *goad of competition?*
At my assertion, you, perhaps, may sneer;
But that wise man, nay, wisest man of old,

Æsop, who many a warning lesson told,
A fable wrote, in which he makes it clear,
That beasts can jealous be, and strive to vie
With other beasts: if you the fact deny
Pray read this fable, first-rate of its class,
And call'd, my friends,—the Lap-dog, and the Ass.

There was a gentleman of good renown,
Who dwelt, I fancy, in a country town,
And had a Lap-dog, a most merry thing,
Black nos'd, like spaniel dogs, that pleas'd a king,
(That king I mean whose foolish conduct tries one,
Who ne'er said foolish thing, nor did a wise one,)
He had a donkey also, long-ear'd elf!
Whom he permitted to enjoy himself
In a green paddock, at the end of which,
As the good gentleman was very rich,
And could afford himself indulgencies,
There was a smart alcove, with a veranda,
To shade his eyes from day's too strong effulgencies,
And o'er it, sweetest flowers were taught to wander.
There sat our gentleman to read or sleep,
While up his lap, the little dog would creep,
Whene'er his master dos'd,
And there, like dormouse, he repos'd;
Then, when he woke, with winning grace,
He would jump up and lick his face;
Or, by some other fond caress,
His grateful tenderness express:
And then, the acme of his joy to show,
He ne'er would fail
To wag his tail,
And treat his master with a sharp *bow wow.*
So pass'd of man and dog, the summer hours,
But not unmark'd by him upon the grass,
The thistle-loving ass,
Whose heart the canker, envy, thence devours.
At length, he sought a neighboring pond, and there,
Within its face, as in a glass reflected,
He all his features, and his face inspected;
Then cried, "why surely, I'm as fair,
As that mean, little, noisy, capering dog,

That's not much bigger than a full-siz'd hog;
His ears are short, but mine are long,
So is my nose, and as to powers of song,
In my opinion, they could have no ear,
Who could the barking of that cur compare
With the pathetic and sonorous sound
Of my deep bray, that wakes the echoes round;
Yet, I must own, our master is so blind,
And to that animal so strangely kind,
That ev'ry day one sees
The creature on his knees;
And when he licks his face,
He gives him an embrace;
If he puts out his paws,
Oh! then such loud applause!
But when he barks, and makes his odious din,
Then most he seems approving smiles to win;
While I, unheeded, eat my grass, or roots,
Or, if I'm notic'd, when I dare draw nigh,
My master soon averts his eye,
And cries, go, get out of my way thou brute!

Well, I'm resolv'd, I too will strive to please,
My dear protector, by such tricks as these;
He does not know how charming I can be:
He never saw me give my foot to shake,
Nor in the air like dancer spring;
And I believe, I don't mistake,
When I assert, he never heard me sing.
Then how can he admire, poor man,
The charms he never saw?
I'll go upon a different plan,
And try upon myself to draw
The love and praise that short-legg'd elf
Has, hitherto, attracted to himself."
So said, so done, and the next time, 'tis said,
His master came to seek his bower's green shade,
The donkey would not let him pass,
But such a caper gave upon the grass;
Heels overhead,
That full of dread,
The good old gentleman made a swift retreat,

And too alarm'd to speak, ran to his seat;
For bit by fly, call'd *gad*,
He thought the tumbling brute was grown quite mad;
And he thought so still more,
When setting up his bray or roar,
The donkey, mimic-like,
Held up his foot, less form'd to coax than strike;
And little made like tiny dogs to tap.
Then, rushing on his wond'ring master,
Who little look'd for such great disaster,
Tried, vain attempt! to sit upon his lap!
In short, could never lap-dog, poodle, monkey,
More fond and playful be, than was our donkey.
O! what caresses and what melody!
No wonder, that, too terrify'd to fly,
The gentleman cried out amain:
"Will! Thomas! come this moment, or I'm slain."
Will, Thomas, heard and soon dislodg'd our hero,
Who look'd, and felt a *Zero;*
But harder soon his plight,
His hand each servant raises,
And stead of kind caress and grateful praises,
They rain down blows upon the luckless wight;
Then to the stable dragg'd, no more a ranger
In the green paddock, tie him to the manger!—
There, in revenge for this unkind partiality,
What could our ass, poor Don Dismality,
Do you think, to save him from distraction,
Since for assault he could not bring an action?
Know then, he tried to give his wrath relief,
By harsh remarks upon his cause of grief.
Against the lap-dog he essayed,
Midst grooms, and men, and boys, to raise a faction,
By underrating the poor thing's pretensions,
And imputations, that were half inventions.
In short the donkey plied that common trade,
I mean that common trade, yclept *detraction*,
And I begin and end, with this position,
The source from which detraction springs,
The power which imps its harpy wings;
IS CHIEFLY UNSUCCESSFUL COMPETITION.

RECAPITULATION:—That ministers of the gospel are, like other men, exposed to the danger of competition, and should therefore *watch*.

That they should also set their faces against mischievous gossip.

That philanthropists, who are often in competition at public meetings and committees, should also be on their guard.

Lastly, by one of Æsop's fables, I illustrate the power of unsuccessful competition.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON DETRACTION.

WHAT is detraction? According to the derivation of the word, it means to draw or take from, *alias* to depreciate. The province of detraction is to lessen the merit of persons, objects, and things, by severe comments, by finding fault, by ridicule, and by mimickry; relating degrading anecdotes of those whom he wishes to lower.

Detraction is of two kinds, it may be acted as well as spoken. I shall begin with the latter species, and endeavor to describe its varieties. I endeavored in my former chapter to prove that general and particular competition were, consciously or unconsciously, the principal and most pernicious source of detraction, and I shall try to show, in some of the following pages, in what manner a detracting spirit endeavors to effect its purposes. Though detraction is one of the most powerful rulers in society, it does not affect the pomp of a sovereign; it has no levées or gala days, but it delights quite as much in the privacy of a tête-à-tête, in the domestic circle of a large family, or even more, perhaps, than in an assembly of a more public and extended nature. A tea-party is proverbially said to be the favorite scene of *scandal;* but though all scandal is certainly detraction, it by no means follows that all detraction is scandal, and the difference I think is this: scandal is an evil report of a person's actions, and is detraction amounting to defamation. But the detraction of which I shall most especially and largely treat, is lessening remarks on a person's *qualities*, manners, and pretensions; and many, I had almost said all, indulge in

this lowering conversation, who would shrink with conscientious aversion from relating a tale of scandal. Besides, however common scandal may be, it never can be as common as *detraction*, in the sense in which I understand it, because the arm of the law defends reputations in some degree; and those who injure the fame of man or woman, run the risk of answering for their fault before the bar of justice, or according to the heathenish custom of worldly honor. But mere detractors may wage their petty war with the utmost security, against the objects of whom they may be consciously or unconsciously envious, but they are certain of enlisting others immediately on their side; nor, perhaps, are they at all aware that what appears to them nothing but a delightful way of beguiling the time, is, in fact, an unwarrantable attack on the merits, respectability, and rights, of their fellow-creatures—is, in reality, the evidence and result of an unchristian spirit, and may certainly be ranked under the solemnly-forbidden indulgence, *evil speaking*.

Amongst the benefits to be derived from general education, and the utmost cultivation of the mind, amongst all classes, I consider a probable diminution of detraction as one of the greatest advantages. For when education and acquirements become so general, that the most modest of women need not fear to talk of what she knows, and can converse on books without the dread of being considered a blue-stocking; the tone of conversation will insensibly become raised. At present, it is (may I dare to assert it?) the ignorance of women in general, that the narrow views in men occasioned by the long habit of considering women as unfit for rational conversation, which fills provincial society, more especially, with detraction; for the women when alone, and the men when they join the women, have no general objects on which they can converse, after "la pluie et le beau-temps" have been sufficiently discussed, except the gossip of the

day, and observations on the persons, dress, manners, and morals, perhaps, of their associates.

Detraction is the readiest and the easiest theme, therefore it is preferred; but were both sexes to be taught to feel that it is disgraceful not to be willing and able to converse of better things, (and this conviction must be the result of universal education,) one's neighbors' faults and follies, distresses, disgraces, or their more unwelcome success, would cease to be brought into discussion, even in the confidence of a tête-à-tête, as the only means of killing time; and detraction, with its mischievous effects on those who are its narrators, on those who hear it, and on those who are its objects, would be driven away from society with the contempt and aversion it deserves.

A lady at C——, near London, instituted, several years ago, a conversation party, which was to meet at her house on a certain day, at the beginning of every month; a question of morals was to be the subject discussed. She designed this meeting for the benefit of her young acquaintance of both sexes; and the female part of the audience were expected to work for the poor while the gentlemen conversed. Any one was at liberty to propose a question to the party then assembled, to be discussed at the next meeting. These questions, which are always given in writing, are deposited in a vase; and one being drawn forth by chance, is to be the subject debated when they assemble again. Most of the speakers are distinguished for their talents and piety. It is a remarkable fact, that this conversation party (as it is called) has for twenty-five years met uninterruptedly, ever since the day of its institution; as the lady, at whose house it always assembles, desires her doors should be opened for its reception, even when she is absent from home. An analyis of each subject discussed in the evening is written by some one present and read at the commencement of the following sitting. The friend who gave me this account, and who is

worthy to partake and able to describe its intellectual advantages, informs me, that the first time of her being present the question discussed was censoriousness, and she wished I had had the benefit of hearing what passed, as I might have turned it to the profit of the book which I am writing. She thinks, that if the whole of those proceedings were published it would form an interesting collection of moral essays, as the speakers are most of them accustomed to composition, and in the habit of instructing, enlightening, and benefiting their fellow-creatures.

I do not mean, by giving the above account, to invite any one to form a similar institution; though, if I lived at C——, I should be desirous of belonging to this; but I have had pleasure in reading such an instance of wise and individual benevolence, displayed in her who planned this meeting originally for the benefit of youth, and has hitherto continued it with successful perseverance. When her place here shall know her no more, I feel assured that her memory will be loved and cherished, and that "many a youth, and many a maid," will be able, probably, in after life, to trace some pious feelings and some virtuous excitement, whose influence has been blessed to them, to these meetings at the house of their departed friend, and will mention her name with respectful love and grateful reverence.*

As I am desirous of profiting in this little work, by the assistance of those far wiser than I am, I shall give the following extract from Archbishop Leighton, on the text, "Thou shalt not bear false

* Since I wrote the above, a *reading party* (as it is called) has been instituted in this city, by some of the younger members of the Society of Friends. At this meeting, which takes place every three weeks, at different houses, in regular succession, one of the young men reads aloud, while the young women are employed in working for the poor; and between the intervals of reading, the conversation turns on what has been read.

It is one of the rules of this meeting, that their conversation should be on *things*, and not on *persons*.

witness against thy neighbor;" for though, as I said before, "bearing false witness" is in one sense the worst species, the very climax of evil speaking, and goes beyond, therefore, what I am treating of, still there is, in this extract, so much that bears immediately on my subject, and it contains such excellent, and I may add necessary, instruction, that I cannot forbear to lay it before my readers.

"Perjury, or false testimony, in a public judiciary way, is, we see, by the express words and letter of the command, forbidden, as the highest and most heinous wrong of the kind; but under the name of this, all the other kinds and degrees of offence against our neighbor's good name are comprised: 1. All private ways of calumny and false imputation. 2. All ungrounded and false surmises, or suspicions; all uncharitable constructions of others' actions and carriage. 3. Strict remarking of the faults of others, without any calling to do so, or honest intention of their good, which appears, if having observed any thing, that of truth is reprovable, we seek not to reclaim by secret and friendly admonition, but, *passing by themselves*, divulge it abroad to others; for it is a most foolish self-deceit to think, that because it is not forged, but true, which thou speakest, this keeps thee free of the commandment: no, thy false intention and malice make it calumny and falsehood in thee, although, for the matter of it, what thou sayest be most true: all thou gainest by it is, that thou dost tumble and bemire thyself in the sin of another, and makest it, possibly, more thine than it is his own who committed it; for he, may be, hath some touch of remorse who committed it; whereas it is evident thou delightest in it; and though thou preface it with a whining and feigned regret, and semblance of pitying him, and add withal some words of commending him in somewhat else; this is but the gilding and sugaring of the pill, to make men swallow it the more easily, and thy bitter malice pass unperceived. They that by their calling ought to watch over the

lives of others, must do it faithfully and diligently, admonishing and rebuking privately; and where that prevails not, they may, yea they ought, to do it more publicly, but all in love, seeking nothing but the glory of God and the salvation of souls. 4. Easy hearing and entertaining of mis-reports and detraction, when others speak them, Exod. xxiii. 1; this is that which maintains and gives subsistence to calumny, otherwise it would starve and die of itself, if nobody took it in and gave it lodging. When malice pours it out, if our eyes be shut against it, and there be no vessel to receive it, it would fall like water upon the ground, and could no more be gathered up; but there is that same busy humor that men have, it is very busy, and yet the most have it, more or less, a kind of delight and contentment to hear evil of others, unless it be of such as they affect; *that* they readily drink in, not without some pleasure, whatsoever is spoken of this kind. *The ear trieth the words, as the mouth tasteth the meat*, Job xxxiv. 3; but, certainly, the most ears are perverse and distempered in the taste, as some kind of palates are, and can find sweetness in sour calumny." "They offend that seek, in any kind, at the expense of the good name and esteem of *others*, to increase their *own;* who try, out of others' ruins, to make up themselves, and therefore pull down as much as they can, and are glad to have others to detract from the repute of their brethren; particularly, any that are in likelihood to surpass and obscure them."

I have alluded to the bad effect of evil speaking on those who hear it, and on those who are its objects; for, in the first place, detracting conversation injures the utterers of it, because they are guilty of positive sin themselves in so speaking: in the second place, it injures those who hear it, because it is a snare to them, and leads them by bad example into commission of the same sin. In the third place, it essentially injures the individuals who are the objects of it; for such a mutual censure of persons

with whom, perhaps, we intimately associate, not only lessens them in our opinion, but insensibly weakens our regard for them, as we never can continue to love those individuals whom we are daily conscious of having injured. Their kindness, their smiles are a sort of reproach to our conscience, and we become more eager than ever to find out and to descant on their foibles, in order to excuse to ourselves the change in our sentiments. I believe that the only means by which we can be certain of loving our friends with a strong and unvariable regard is, never to allow ourselves to talk of their failings, nor even to think of them, if we can possibly avoid it, except as a salutary warning to ourselves.

It is now time for me to give some examples of detraction. But I must premise, that nothing is so likely to provoke a detracting spirit, and lead to traducing observations, as making any one the object of EXAGGERATED PRAISE; and that I never heard either man or woman declared, by some devoted friend or kind relation, to be *perfect;* that I did not see the self-love of every one who heard it up in arms; and the paragon has been hurled down from the pinnacle of imagined perfection, by the relation of some lowering anecdote, or the utterance of some degrading but just observation, which would never have been made, perhaps, but for the extravagant encomium above alluded to; nay, I have had occasion to suspect and believe, that some persons indulge in violent praises of those whom they *scarcely envy*, in order that they may enjoy the detraction which they are well aware their praises will excite; nay, such is the obliquity of human nature, that praise is not always the tribute of a full heart, overflowing with sincere admiration, but the indulgence of a malignant desire to mortify the self-love of those who *hear* it.

I know persons who never praise any one, except in order to mortify such hearers as are notoriously in competition with the lauded object, and as

might naturally be expected, the same persons have been seen to writhe almost in agony at hearing the just encomiums bestowed on competitors for fame, whether the rival be man or woman, and then give away, at length, into the most cruel detraction from the abilities and even moral qualities of the persons so commended. I have met, but I know not where, with the following anecdote. A gentleman was once so notorious amongst his companions for his envy, and his almost morbid dislike to hear any one praised, that they resolved to expose him by the following stratagem: They invented a person, a name, and a situation, and when they were next in company with the envious man, they talked of this imaginary being as the first of his species, and invested him with every grace, talent, and acquirement, till the envious auditor could bear no more, but, hastily interrupting the last eulogist, he exclaimed, "All this is such romantic nonsense and exaggeration that I can be silent no longer! I was acquainted with the gentleman in question, a few years ago, and I pronounce him utterly unworthy of the praise you have bestowed; nay, if I were to tell you all I know of him, you would blush for having set up such an idol of worship." This unprincipled effusion of jealous rage was received, at first, with an awful silence, such as is usually experienced when one hears of or witnesses some act of moral delinquency; but it was soon succeeded by a burst of indignation, ending in a sort of hooting and groaning interrupted only by the voice of him who was deputed to tell the truth to the still agitated offender; namely, that it was utterly impossible he should have ever known the gentleman in question, or aught against him, as he never had any existence, except in their invention, and that he and his perfection had only been imagined, in order to try the force of this hearer's besetting sin.

Whether the culprit was warned and taught by this disgraceful experience I do not remember to have heard, and the whole story may be a fiction;

but I dare say there are few of us who have not felt at times as if extravagant and exaggerated praise of others was a sort of injustice to ourselves, and perhaps to those whom we tenderly love; and when hearing any one described to be the most delightful, most wise, most virtuous, most accomplished, and most superior of created beings, there are few hearers who have not experienced a desire to substitute the more reasonable, and probably juster expression of *one* of the most delightful, wise, virtuous, accomplished, and superior of created beings. The eulogists, who do not use this phrase, so much more balmy to self-love than the other, run the risk of calling forth the jealous feelings of all whom they address, and expose their idol to the risk of being instantly assailed. I have always considered such encomiasts as wholly deficient in that knowledge of the human heart, which is so necessary to keep our own hearts free from sin, and to prevent us from laying snares for the hearts of others. Such extravagant encomiasts appear to me the nursing mothers of DETRACTORS.

I shall now recapitulate what has been said in the present chapter.

I have stated that detraction is of two kinds, spoken and acted; that though all scandal is detraction, detraction is not always scandal, that scandal or defamation cannot be as common as detraction, because the law in some measure defends reputation: that when education becomes so general, that women may venture to talk of books, and things of general utility, without the fear of being called blue stockings, the tone of conversation will be necessarily raised, and detracting discourses abolished.

That evil speaking has injurious effects on the utterer and the hearer, as well as the subject of it, and wherefore.

That the only means by which to secure unalterable regard towards our friends, is never to talk of their failings.

That nothing is so likely to provoke detracting observations, as exaggerated eulogy.

That some persons indulge in extravagant praises of those whom they secretly envy, in order to enjoy the detraction which they are well aware their praises will excite.

That such is the obliquity of some individuals, they never praise but with a view to mortify the person whom they address, particularly when they know their auditor to be in rivalship with the person so eulogized.

Lastly, that extravagant eulogists are the nursing mothers of detractors.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE DIFFERENT CLASSES OF DETRACTORS.

I SHALL now proceed to enumerate the different classes of detractors.

Detractors may be divided under the following heads:—

Gossips.
Talkers-over.
Laughers-at.
Banterers.
Nicknamers.
Stingers.
Scorners.
Sneerers.
Eye-inflictors.
Mimicks.
Caricaturists.
Epigrammatists.

GOSSIPS are first on my list, and I begin with them the more willingly, because I believe that all my readers will think of gossips when I first mention detractors.

Still there are *worse* detractors than professed gossips, though there are none more incorrigible.

Gossips are not always *malevolent*, but they are always *idle*, and it is their idleness that makes them gossips.

Gossips are usually those who have nothing to do, or who can or will do nothing. They know there are twenty-four hours in the day to get rid of, not to improve; for of mental improvement the thorough-bred gossip never thinks. How then can gossips get rid of that burden, called time? How are they "to kill the enemy?" (to use a common

phrase.) The enemy, indeed, though they see him not as he really is, for time is hurrying them on *unconsciously* but *surely*, with all their sins of omission on their heads, to an awful eternity.

It is so, but what does that signify, to the gossip, so as the day be but gotten through? The gossip may pass the early hours of it in bed, and in sleep, and not only awful eternity but troublesome time itself be forgotten in morning slumbers. But even gossips must get up at last, and then what is before them? A *vacuum*, which must be filled up, with what? not with reading; the true gossip cannot read. I doubt whether a thorough-bred one ever read a book entirely through, for gossips let their minds down so completely by gossipping habits, that like ground, left long uncultivated, they become incapable of cultivation, and barren they remain; bearing no vegetation of their own, but stuck full of news, reports, scandal, and the lies of the day, which they have gathered from others, and with which they decorate their conversation, when on their round of calls. A male gossip, who used frequenty to visit at my house in London, said to me in a pompous tone of voice, and with a contemptuous sneer, when I asked him if he had read such and such books, "*Books!* no, I never read *books*, I only read *men;*" and perhaps other gossips would reply in the same manner. I shall here observe, that male gossips are full as numerous as female ones; all men as well as all women, who have empty minds, must be gossips: if they do not fill their minds, by the exertions of their eyes, with *wholesome* and *necessary* knowledge, they must feed them, by means of their ears, or life would stagnate, with *unwholesome* and *unnecessary* knowledge, the knowledge of tittle-tattle, and other people's affairs. And at a certain hour they commonly sally forth on their daily round, either to the coffee-room, or the club-room, to a certain walk in a certain street, or on a certain road, or to make a certain succession of calls. But male gossips alone can frequent the clubs or coffee-

room, the females are confined to morning visits, or shopping and the promenade. Let me not be supposed to confound gossip-calls with morning visits of friendship and kind inquiry; *they* are usually acceptable, and commonly well received. But gossips by profession do not call to amuse *others*, but to get rid of *themselves*. In short, gossips are *time-killers*, and unhappily for those whom they frequent, they cannot commit the murder alone, they must have accomplices; nor does the guilt always stop there. Common chit-chat concerning dress, and marriage, births, burials, and bankruptcies, becomes at length insipid; something of a higher relish must be found; and then, oh! then, murder of even a worse kind succeeds, and to the killing of time succeeds the slaughter of reputations.

Thus, as I before said, gossips are not originally malevolent, but their evil speaking results from their idle habits, and empty minds; for all minds require excitement of some sort, and where there is not proper and virtuous stimulus, there must be that improper and vicious excitement which tale-bearing, tittle-tattle, and gossip, produce. How like the existence of a squirrel in a cage, is that of a gossip, particularly that of the regular notorious gossip in a country town. The squirrel sleeps well, wakes at a certain hour, eats his accustomed food, takes his accustomed exercises in that twirling thing, which always goes the same way, and which he cannot get out of; the squirrel expects and takes with much pleasure the offered nut or fruit, which is to him, what a piece of news is to the gossip; and then he goes quietly to his bed, when his usual quantity of food and exercise is taken, and wakes next day to a repetition of the same. And what does the gossip do more? The squirrel acquires no new ideas in the day, nor, I fear, does the gossip; but we do not expect a squirrel to gain ideas; we do expect it from human beings, for we know that they have duties to perform, and souls to be saved, whether they know it or not; know it I

trust they do, but then they forget it. The mournful truth is, they have so long accustomed themselves to idle away life and pass it in *long talks*, (as the savages say) which can do no one any good, and must do positive harm, that they are likely to remain what I have called them, nearly *incorrigible*; with them, alas! all inquiries are external; they know not what it is to commune with the *secret heart*; they are well read in the defects of others, but they never think of trying to discover their own. Therefore they must continue to saunter from street to street, from the club to the coffee-room, from one house to another, and from shop to shop, in weary succession, like the squirrel in its ever-circling wheel, the pages of their passing hours bearing no characters fit to be handed by recording time to eternity, a burden often to themselves, and wholly useless if not wearisome to others.

Alas! poor squirrel! but still more pitiable gossip! for the squirrel knows not his privations, but gossips must occasionally be conscious of *theirs*. They must know the little mind that idleness produces listlessness, want of regular occupation, weariness; and that with increasing years comes increasing irritability, the result of conscious uselessness, and the want of those resources which enliven others. Gossips are indeed a pitiable race; and to the young gossip who may not be wholly incorrigible, I recommend a perusal of the following admirable admonition. "Let any man pass an evening in *listless idleness*, or even in reading some silly tale, and compare the state of his mind when he goes to sleep, or gets up next morning, with its state some other day, when he has passed some hours in going through the proofs, by facts and reasoning, of some of the great doctrines in natural science, learning truths wholly new to him, and satisfying himself by careful examination of the grounds on which known truths rest, so as to be not only acquainted with the doctrines themselves,

but able to show why he believes them, and to prove before others that they are true; and he will find as great a difference as can exist in the same being; the difference between looking back upon *time improperly wasted*, and *time spent in self-improvement*. He will feel himself in the one case listless and dissatisfied, in the other comfortable and happy; in the one case, if he does not appear to himself humbled, at least he will not have earned any claims to his own respect; in the other case he will enjoy a proud consciousness of having by his own exertions become a more wise, and therefore a more exalted creature."*

The following appropriate extract is from the Government of the Tongue, a work written by the author of the Whole Duty of Man.

"The historian gives it as an ill indication of Domitian's temper, that he employed himself in catching and tormenting flies; and sure they fall not under a much better character either for wisdom or good nature, who thus snatch up all the little fluttering reports they can meet with, to the prejudice of their neighbors. But, besides the divulging the faults of others, there is another branch of detraction naturally springing from this root, and *that* is censuring and severe judging of them. We think not we have well played the historians, when we have told the thing, unless we add also our remarks and animadversions in it, ... a process contrary to all rules of law or equity, for the plaintiff to assume the part of a judge. And we may easily divine the fate of that man's fame that is so unduly tried."

It is not necessary for me to give any specimen of the manner and language of a gossip, because I illustrate them in the following account of the most numerous class of detractors, and the second on my list, namely, TALKERS-OVER.

* Vide the "Preliminary Treatise on the objects, advantages, and pleasures of science," by H. BROUGHAM, p. 46.

Though gossips must be talkers-over, talkers-over are not always gossips, but are other persons of a higher order of mind, and capable sometimes of better things. By talkers-over I mean myself, and almost every one else; that is, every one who, whether in tête-à-tête, in small family, or friendly circles, or in the more extended field of a large assembly, talks over friends and acquaintances, and makes them, in any way, the favorite theme of conversation.—Such conversation often begins with kind inquiry, and perhaps encomium; sometimes, also, with pity; but pity is often the turnpike road leading directly to detraction, and few stop at it, but proceed through it to detraction itself, with the rapidity of a carriage going down an inclined plane on a rail-road; for it is, perhaps, suggested, that the illness, the sorrows, or ruin, of the persons pitied proceed from their own fault, and the sufferers are charitably converted into *delinquents* also. But whenever or however the conversation begins, if it continues on persons instead of things, it ends commonly in detraction; that is, in lessening remarks on the subject of it, which, if they were overheard by their object, would cause them, probably, a sleepless night, after a painful day—would make them shudder, perhaps, at the treachery of the relative or friend in whom they had confided, and would cause them to look upon existence itself as a trial to be endured, not as a benefit to be enjoyed. Happy those who, when convinced by painful experience of the emptiness of worldly dependence, are enabled to obey the important command:—"Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils!" and to rely wholly on that Friend which faileth not—"the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

I own, that there is something tempting and agreeable in talking over one's friends and acquaintances; and even children soon learn to enjoy it, as the following anecdote evinces. "Mamma," cried a little boy, while his parents were receiving some

morning visiters, "when will these people go away that we may talk about them?" TALKING-OVER, as I before observed, often begins without any wish or intention of depreciating; but there are few persons, if any, who have not some weak points; and when talkers-over get together tête-à-tête, parents with their children, brothers with their sisters, with an occasional staying friend in the house, it is impossible but that faults should be canvassed, as well as perfections, and that what began in a love of indolent amusement and innocent gossip, (if gossip can be entirely innocent) ends commonly in ridicule, detraction, or perhaps *scandal*. Still there is no study so interesting as that of one's fellow-creatures and their actions, motives, sorrows, and propensities; and there is also no study so easy. To succeed in the study of science and languages, to be learned in books, or in art, requires constant and severe application, and a considerable degree of quickness and ability; but the *talker-over* requires nothing to qualify him for his vocation, but eyes to see with, ears to hear with, and a tongue to speak with; no superior degree of ability is requisite to do all he wishes. Talking-over is a complete leveller of all superiority of talent. The person of mean abilities succeeds in it quite as well as the person of superior understanding; and for *cutting up* characters, for misjudging motives, for lowering the reputation of a highly-gifted acquaintance or associate, an unintellectual man or woman is as well fitted as the most enlightened. I have always considered it as a vulgar error, or as an observation the result of envy, that all clever persons are, and must be, *satirical;* for my experience, on the contrary, has convinced me that the most satirical of my acquaintance are those who have more quickness than sense, who mistake severity for shrewdness, and satirical observations for wit and humor. Instead of its being true, that the intellectual are always satirical, it would be more just to say, that persons are often satirical in the hope of appearing

clever, from the erroneous belief that an aptitude to satire is a proof of ability. A tendency to see the ridiculous and the ludicrous in persons or things is nothing more than a quickness of observation, which even children possess; and I agree with an admirable writer, that "*true wit* and *true good nature* are more nearly allied than most persons have any idea of."

But what do you mean by a TALKER-OVER? alas! it is very difficult to illustrate talking-over by an example. It is more difficult for a painter to imitate a dead flat, than a rock or a mountain; and it is much easier to describe an interesting event, than a common-place conversation; but I will endeavor to explain my meaning by a supposed dialogue of talkers-over, and probably my readers will recognise in it their own daily experience.

I will suppose that I am paying a morning visit in some family, consisting of two or three persons, all present, with a caller-in or two like myself. When the usual topics of the weather, and my health, or that of the rest of the party have been discussed, the mistress of the house says, probably,—"Pray, have you heard of Mrs. Alpha lately?" "No, I have not." "She is abroad, I think." "Yes, and all her family, and they were quite well when I last heard of them." "Have you any thoughts of going to London soon?" "Yes, very soon; art thou and thy family going this year?" "No, oh! no, I wish we were going; but papa and mamma say no," cries one of the daughters. "Town is very full," observes the visiter, "and the exhibitions will soon be open." "Pray, have you heard how Mrs. Beta is?" says the mistress of the house, "I have heard she is very ill." "Very ill indeed, I understand." "She would be a great loss to her family." "Certainly." "How many children has she?" "Six, I believe." "Poor things! what a sad thing it will be if she is taken from them!" "A sad thing indeed!" Hitherto all has gone on well in this talking-over, insipid but harmless, and perhaps

might have gone on thus as long again, but we were beginning to pity in the last observation. Oh! pity is a sad snare! and we go on thus. "Yes, it does seem very hard when a mother is taken from her childen in the prime of life," observes the mistress of the house; "but some mothers are greater losses than others, and Mrs. Beta is a well-meaning woman, but she does so spoil her children!" "Indeed!" "Oh, dear, yes." "Mamma, do you not remember the story of her little boy Henry Beta, which Mrs. Gamma told us, and what a naughty boy he is? "Oh, yes, and then they are brought up so expensively! it is incredible how much linen they dirty in the week, and how many clothes they wear out in the year." "And I have heard, now you mention it, that Mr. and Mrs. Beta don't live happily together, and that is a sad example for children." "Poor thing! well, it may be for the good of her family that she is removed." "Pray, how is her brother going on now?" "Not well, I fear." "I have not heard any thing of him for some time, but he is probably in the King's Bench." "And the youngest sister, I believe," says the visiter, "has been much talked of lately; she is likely, to say the best of her, to make a very bad match." "Indeed!" Oh, dear! yes." "Mamma, do you not remember that Mrs. Gamma—" "My dear," I wish you would not quote Mrs. Gamma so often, for she is never very accurate, and when she has taken a dislike to any one, she is still less to be depended upon." "Yes," cries the visiter, "I have heard she is apt to take dislikes, and to speak a little at random, and they do say—" but enough, my readers must be as tired of perusing, as I am of writing this sort of dialogue; thus, talking over one person and another, though it may begin in friendly inquiries, gets on, by little and little, into that style of conversation, which deserves the name of detraction: and though I have not put words in my own mouth on this occasion, I must confess that I might have borne my part in it,

had the conversation been real—and real in one sense it was; for it is what is said and heard in society every day. Some one may be tempted to observe, "but what can one do? one must see the faults of our acquaintances, and if they do not deserve it, one cannot be so false as to praise them." True, but we need not be eager to bring their faults forward. It is right and necessary for my own self-defence, that I should know that Mrs. Gamma is inaccurate in her narrations; there is no harm in any one's finding this out, nor in thinking that Mrs. Beta spoils her children, or that her husband and she live unhappily together. The fault is in making these things needlessly and constantly the theme of conversation; for then, indeed, social intercourse degenerates into pernicious gossip; and time, which is the most valuable of all our possessions, is wasted in useless and mischievous detraction. But of all talkers-over, those who canvass the defects and misfortunes of their friends, with the tone of benevolent pity, are to me the most offensive. Benevolence should make us turn away from the distresses and disappointments, which it is not in our power to alleviate; and when I am forced by a talker-over to recall all the miseries of those I love or am interested in, I am provoked into an unjust idea of the motives of the speakers, and impute them to a detracting spirit, or mean pleasure in contrasting their own prosperity with the adversity of their contemporaries or associates, and this is not, I fear, to be attributed to the pleasure arising from a sense of the divine goodness expressed in one of Dr. Watts's beautiful hymns.

> "Not more than others I deserve,
> But God has given me more;"

for a pleasure like *that* is deeply felt and sacred to one's private hours of solemn thanksgiving.

The thorough talker-over is a thorough *croaker* also. If an acquaintance gets into a new business,

he or she will doubtless be ruined. If a friend is ill, the croaker is sure the poor thing will never recover, therefore I think I might have been justified in including the croaker among my list of detractors.

Detraction requires so little ability, that I wonder we are not too proud to be guilty of it. Some talent is requisite to praise with just discrimination; and who are the most given to laugh at and ridicule their acquaintances of all ages? Forward children, and boys and girls; and in them, this is not a proof of being clever but a wish to appear so. The Italian proverb says, "The hand that can only build a cottage can pull down a palace;" and I am often reminded of it when I hear the petty sarcasms of petty persons, on the infirmities of the intellectual, gifted beings, who, with all their failings, are still upon an eminence which their censurers can never reach. But it is this conviction that provokes the detractor. The persons discussed are consciously superior in external graces, talents, virtues, and worldly advantages, and the discussers are thus taking a safe revenge on them for the mortification which this known superiority has inflicted. Some writer calls revenge a "wild justice;" and I doubt not, but that many men and women, who have provoked others to depreciate those of whom they are jealous, or have detracted from their merit themselves, have in a degree convinced their conscience that they were only performing an act of justice, and that they, and they alone, were putting these objects of blind admiration in their right place, or on their true level.

There is another sort of *talking-over*, common to myself and others, which is peculiarly offensive; I mean, praise accompanied by a *but:* for the "but" neutralizes the encomium, and makes it real censure in the assumed garb of kindness. The following extracts from the Universal Passion will exemplify what I mean.

"Daphne, says Clio, has a charming eye
What pity 'tis her shoulder is awry!
Aspasia's shape, indeed, but then her air;
The man has parts who finds instruction there.
Almeria's wit has something that's divine,
And wit's enough, how few in all things shine!
Selina serves her friends, relieves the poor;
Who was it said Selina's near three score?
At Lucia's match I from my soul rejoice;
The world congratulates so wise a choice.
His lordship's rent-roll is exceeding great,
But mortgages will sap the best estate.
* * * * * * * * * *
Without a but, Hortensia she commends:
The first of women, and the best of friends;
Owns her in person, wit, fame, virtue, bright;
But how comes this to pass? *She died last night.*
Thus nymphs commend, who still at satire rail;
Satire is needless, if such praise prevail."

Perhaps it may be said, that society could not exist without talkers-over; and when the subject of public news and occurrences is exhausted, private individuals must in their turn be made the theme of conversation, in those companies which pretend not to be learned or intellectual.

But though as beauty, ugliness, dress, manners, marriages, deaths, sicknesses, and recoveries, bankruptcies, legacies, and so on, make up all the worldly interests of human life, they must therefore be the most common topics for human beings to discuss, I must still contend, that such discussions should be marked with charity, kindness, forbearance, with a wish to excuse, not a mean desire to condemn; and that affairs of greater moment, of greater importance to us, both as creatures of time and heirs of immortality, ought to succeed to the discussion of persons; and when we assemble together for the purpose of social converse here, it would be surely better not to lose sight entirely of the interests of hereafter.

The LAUGHERS-AT come next on my list, and

these are not very distantly related to those "who sit in the seat of the scornful."

To this class of conversers, talkers-over are, comparatively, desirable associates. The latter often mean no harm, are chiefly solicitous to pass away time in a manner suitable to all capacities, and frequently meet and separate without holding any one up to the serious injury of excessive ridicule.

But ridicule is the very soul of the conversation of true *laughers-at.*

They see the absurd, where others, however observant, cannot. "What was there ridiculous in this or that?" is often the reply to these laughing satirists, and they can give no answer, but a second ell of grin to what seemed to others only an inch of joke.

One's looks, words, gestures, motions, are all liable to provoke the *laugher's-at* detracting risibility, which is not always kept in bounds, even in one's presence.

The eye of the true *laugher-at* is full of that meaning, which the poet calls "the lurking devil in the eye," while the same devil lurks in the corners of the mouth, making them every moment ready to distend, with unkind mirth, at the foibles, real or imagined, of their unconscious, but sometimes conscious, victims. Old as I am in years, and still older in worldly experience, there are many, even amongst my young acquaintance, from whose detracting laugh and sneering observation I occasionally shrink, feeling myself both unsafe and uncomfortable in their presence.

But I hope that I have more power to struggle with this unworthy feeling than I had in days that are past, and that I never act on them as I was once tempted to do on a particular occasion, when I was reproved and taught by the precept and example of my husband. The anecdote to which I allude is as follows, and I have related it in my memoir of him.

We were one evening in a company consisting

chiefly of men, who possessed rare mental endowments and considerable reputation, but who were, unhappily, led by high animal spirits, and a consciousness of power, to animadvert on their absent acquaintances, with ingenious, unsparing, and unequalled severity; and even the learned, the witty, the agreeable and the beautiful, were set up, like so many nine-pins, to be bowled down again immediately.

"As we kept early hours, I knew that we should probably be the first to leave the party, and I sat in dread of the arrival of twelve o'clock, because I had no doubt but that we should be shown off in our turn for the amusement of the company. At length the expected hour arrived, and I received the usual sign; but I found means of expressing my fears to my husband, and my consequent wish to stay longer.

"A reproving look, and a desire expressed aloud that I should get ready to go, were his only answer, and I obeyed. When we were in the street he said, "I believe that I never in my life acted from a motive so unworthy as that of *fear;* and this was a fear of so contemptible a nature, that I should *always disdain* to be governed by it, and I am really ashamed of you!"

No wonder—I was ashamed of myself; and I can only say in my excuse, that my fears were not *entirely selfish.*

But to resume my subject.

True *laughers-at* are, of all observers, the least accurate. I would as soon employ a caricaturist by profession to draw me the outline of a perfect face or form, as I would take my opinion of any person or thing, from the description of habitual *laughers-at.* Their mental vision is warped, and can take in only part of a whole; nor do they wish to see things as they are. Their aim is to exhibit, in a ludicrous point of view all persons and things. Fairness of judgment is, with them out of the question. Their object is to produce effect; and if a

chorus of laughs be raised at the expense even of unoffending friends and acquaintances, the *laughers-at* are satisfied: and in proportion to the number of victims offered up on the altar of ridicule, is the enjoyment which they derive from their hours of social intercourse; and they return home believing themselves, (and probably with truth,) to have been the life of the company, and the amusement of all who have listened to them.

I know no place in which satire and ridicule can be so securely indulged, as in a large and attached family of brothers and sisters. There one is sure of finding many *laughers-at;* and I cannot imagine a more embarrassing situation than that of a man, whose heart impels him to make proposals to one out of several single sisters. The habit which they have, probably, acquired, of laughing at all their associates, intimate or occasional, is likely to be more than usually exerted on the candidate for the favor of one of them.

For the *true lover* is the most awkward and embarrassed of men, as the poet says:—

> "The lover is a *man afraid*—
> Has neither grace, nor ease, nor art;
> Embarrass'd, comfortless, dismay'd,
> He sinks, the victim of his heart;
> He feels his own demerit most
> When he should most aspire to gain,
> And is, at length, completely lost,
> Because he dare not tell his pain."

When I have heard that any one is paying his addresses to one sister, and exposed to the criticisms of the others, I have pitied him sincerely, because I have doubted of his success, having rarely known a suitor, under these circumstances, accepted at once, if he has been accepted at *all;* not from an amiable reluctance in the lady to leave her sisters, and in them to part with her, but because the poor admirer's person, manners, and qualities, were the

theme of that sort of laughing detraction, of all things most fatal to a lover's success; and I have known more than one instance of a suitor's dismissal, not because he was unpleasing to the object of his attachment, but because he was not agreeable to the taste of her fastidious family.

These satirical young persons were a complete specimen of *laughers-at*, and I should have liked to expostulate with them *thus*:—

"You know your sister's lover to be a gentleman, a man of excellent character, and good principles. How could you, then, because he was rendered awkward and embarrassed by the strength of his attachment, take pleasure in mimicking him, and rendering him ridiculous in your sister's eyes, and running the risk of making him unhappy for years?

"What was your motive? No other, probably, than the habitual desire of showing your fancied wit, and powers of satire; and for this paltry, ungenerous gratification, you have prevented your sister from forming a very desirable connection, and have clouded over, perhaps for life, the prospects of an amiable fellow creature! Is this utter disregard of a man's intrinsic qualities consistent with any views higher than those of this world? Is it not an awful evidence of a worldly spirit, and wholly at variance with that respect for moral worth, and that Christian faith which you so often profess? I should have wished also to alarm their *selfishness*, and have assured them, that their obvious tendency to satirize and ridicule would, undoubtedly, keep suitors to themselves at a respectful distance, and make their vicinity avoided in time as much as that of the fabled upas tree. I could have told them, that I had reason to believe young women who have the reputation of being satirical, are, generally, as securely guarded against matrimonial overtures, as if they were enclosed in the walls of a convent."

"Why dost thou not try thy fortune with that in-

trade for notice and attention, and to obtain in society an ample supply of it.

I have seen sense, learning, virtue, and the modest dignity of female loveliness, overborne, alarmed, and silenced, by the assaults of the banterer. And why was this? Because there is in us all a love of ridicule, which few are able to resist; and as part of the necessary stock in trade of a banterer is the power of exciting laughter, and as we are all ready to laugh, whether it be ill-naturedly or good-naturedly, the banterer knows that when once he has excited the merriment of his auditors, his reign is secure, and he may be as despotically daring as he pleases, while the learned, the witty, and the wise also, know that it would be vain to oppose their gifts to those of the banterer, as his gold leaf goes farther than their gold; that most persons had rather be amused than edified, and that if they be unmercifully attacked themselves, they have, at least the consolation of hearing their associates assailed in their turn.

And sometimes I have seen the BANTERED amply revenged! for the banterer has been met in the field by a banterer more powerful than himself; till, defeated and overpowered after a long contention, he has been forced to surrender, and resign his arms. Then woe to the banterer! for all the bantered have had a blow at him fallen, before whom when erect they trembled; and I have seen such vengeance taken of a prostrate banterer, as has made my pity greater even than my rejoicing, and urged me to bid retributive justice hold its heavy hand. Quizzers are, I think, of the family of banterers; but quizzers and quizzing are so vulgar and disagreeable, that I shall not attempt to give a description of them.

The NICKNAMER is next on the record. Nicknamers are prominent persons amongst detractors; but they are more amusing than scorners and sneerers, and much less offensive. Sometimes a nicknamer is so ingenious, and hits off so exactly the

character of the person nicknamed, that it amounts to wit. Still, nicknaming is a bad and vulgar habit, and usually proceeds from a lowering satirical inclination, and from a desire of being severe with but little trouble.

NICKNAMERS generally look at men, women, and things, through a distorting medium; and though the nicknames themselves be not always offensive, the spirit of the person that gives them *is*, for it is deeply imbued with a love of detraction, usually accompanied by a tendency to malignity, which is easily aroused into positive defamation.

I shall now treat of that class of detractors which I have ventured to denominate STINGERS, or those who inflict on the mind such sudden wounds, as a certain description of little fly, called the MIDGE, inflicts on the body.

STINGERS take a sly opportunity of wounding the self-love of others, particularly, if those they assail have in any way, been the means of mortifying their own. They have a peculiar pleasure where they feel jealousy for themselves, or those who belong to them, in inflicting, as it were, little pinches on the skin of one's mind.

If a poor girl be suspected of a secret and hopeless attachment, and has ever come unpleasantly across the stinger's path, the stinger will suddenly name the suspected object of her love, in order to see the mantling blush betray the hidden wound; while the conscious eye shrinks from the cruelly observant one fixed upon her.

If asked how this can come under the head of detraction, I answer, that as a hopeless attachment is a lowering circumstance in the life of any one, it is from a spirit of detraction that the stinger loves to convict the conscious sufferer of the remaining weakness. In like manner, if a young man be suspected by a stinger of having made unsuccessful proposals to a lady, her name will suddenly be brought forward in order to prove, by his confusion, the truth of the suspicion; while the stinger enjoys

his tell-tale embarrassment, if, as is usually the case, he has in some way or other been in general or particular competition with his tormentor; and the knowledge gained by these unexpected assaults on the feelings of these unfortunates, will be communicated in the next company which the *stinger* enters; in the hypocritical language of compassion for their disappointment and sufferings.

The STINGER is fond of reminding those individuals whom vanity may lead to speak in high terms of any members of their family, of some painful, lowering, depreciating circumstance, connected with them.

"How is your sister?" said a *stinger* to a friend of mine. "Quite well," was the reply; "and though she has had ten children, she looks as handsome, young, and blooming as ever!" "Blooming as ever!" exclaimed the *stinger;* "that is very remarkable; for *my* poor daughter, who is much younger, has lost her color entirely since she had a family. Pray, has your sister had any return of that *suspicious pain in the side?* Poor thing! one could not help fearing for her after her youngest sister was taken away."

The poor brother felt the sting conveyed by these words: his joy in his eldest sister's brilliant bloom was damped at once; he was reminded that his youngest had died of consumption, and that therefore the color of the survivor was, perhaps, only hectic beauty. And whence this ungenerous proceeding? The speaker's daughter had been in competition for beauty with the gentleman's sister, and had, moreover, made a superior marriage.

The near relation of a celebrated man was once in my presence, descanting in company with too much warmth, perhaps, on his talents and success in life; when a *stinger* who happened to be present, said to him, in a voice of seeming kindness, "Pray does your relation squint as much as he used to do, and speak as thickly as he once did?" It was a *palpable hit,* and the eulogist felt his pride in his

gifted relative brought down, as the *stinger* intended that it should be; and I saw that the stinger enjoyed his mortification; but he recovered himself and said, that now he was *reminded* of what he had had pleasure in forgetting; he believed his relation had still some slight remains of the defects in question. But why was this detracting speech made? The STINGER had SONS; and the person in question had outstripped them in the race of life, which they began together.

Advantageous marriages are snares to STINGERS, and never fail to call their venom forth, especially if they have daughters in competition with the marrying parties; for parents are more jealous commonly for their children, than their children for themselves.

Two marriages were discussed one evening where I was visiting, and the relations and friends of the parties were rejoicing in their happy prospects; but, there was a STINGER in the company, and to the relations of one of the contracting parties the *stinger* said, "certainly, the gentleman in question has distinguished abilities, and his character and situation in life are *unexceptionable;* but, was it ever ascertained what his father's last illness was, and by what means his poor mother died so *suddenly*? It was a *mysterious business*, but *poor things! I hope all that was said was not true.*" The relations of the lady changed color, evaded a reply, and their smiling brow was overcast. But why was this wound inflicted? The *stinger* had daughters in competition with the fair girl who was going to marry what is called *well.*

The STINGER asked one of the other rejoicers over the approaching marriage of their relative with a Peer, whether Lord —— gamed, and frequented New-market, as much as he used to do?

The person addressed was surprised, as he had never heard that such were Lord ——'s habits, and was much elevated at the idea of his young cousin's marrying a nobleman, and his pleasure was over-

cast, till he recollected, that the report had probably originated, and the commmnication had certainly been made, through the spirit of envy. But why was this pain inflicted? The young Peeress would in future take precedence of the *stinger* and her own daughters, who thus revenged himself for the anticipated mortification.

There are many STINGERS in the world, many who delight to give sly pinches to our self-love, by implied detraction from our own pretensions, or those of the objects whom we admire; but wherever this ungenerous feeling exists, and is indulged, it arises from general or particular competition.

The SCORNER is next to be discussed.

Under the general name of scorners I include the supercilious and the fastidious.

Dr. Johnson defines the scorner to be "a contemner, despiser, scoffer, ridiculer;" and who that has ever observed the sneer of the supercilious, or listened to the critical objections of the fastidious, but must own, that these are of the family of scorn, and amongst the most ready combattants in the field of detraction?

Scorners are almost the most disagreeable persons whom one meets in society. One is reconciled to the expectation of being criticised when one's back is turned; but scorners cannot be satisfied without inflicting their sting when one is present, and

> "The hint malevolent, the look oblique,
> The obvious satire, the implied dislike,
> The sneer equivocal, the harsh reply,
> And all the cruel language of the eye;
> The taunting word, whose meaning kills,"*

are some of the weapons with which they try to lower even the modest pretensions of others, and establish, though on a sandy foundation, their own superiority.

* Poem on Sensibility, by Hannah More.

Scorn is a more common thing than I once imagined it to be; for I find, on closer inspection, that most individuals feel or express it for some persons or some things.

The purse-proud often show disdain of the poverty which they relieve. University scholars betray infinite contempt for the learning of those who have not had a college education. Mathematicians can scarcely keep their contumely within bounds, when they argue with persons, whose reasoning powers have not been exercised like theirs. But *thorough-bred* scorners seem to have no real respect for any abilities but their own. I say *seem*, for I suspect that it is a consciousness in their heart, that the talents which they depreciate are estimable, and the certainty that they are esteemed by others, which, by exciting their secret envy, provokes their open scorn, especially if the object of general praise come into any near collision with them, in public or private life. Therefore the avowed contempt of scorners is often an involuntary tribute to the merit of its object.

Some persons carry their scorn to such a diseased excess, that if they have been betrayed into praising any thing, before the judgment of others concerning it is known, they loudly retract their favorable opinion, if they find that the subject of their eulogy is the theme of universal praise, and exhibit the same sort of contempt for the judgmeut of the many, felt by Phocion, who, when his opinion in a public debate was received with universal applause, turned to his friends and said, "Have I inadvertently let slip something wrong?"

Are the works of modern painters exhibited to scorners, they eagerly assure the exhibiter that they never look at any pictures but those by *old masters;* and should the generous and candid encourager of modern art venture to say, that if all persons had the same exclusive taste, artists of the present day must starve; and therefore, if he did not really admire their works, he should buy them, be-

cause modern *artists must live*,—I doubt not, but as the French wit of former days replied to a poor applicant who said to him, "Il faut que je vive,"* the scorner would superciliously answer, "Je n'en vois pas la nécessité."†

If a book by a modern author is the theme of conversation, the male or female scorner will reply, (for there are scorners of both sexes,) "Really I tried to read it, but it was so dull I could not get on;" especially if the work be by a friend, or associate, or if asked whether they have read what a particular acquaintance has lately written, the answer is, "Oh, no! I know him (or her) to well to read his (or her) productions. Life is too short for me to read all the books from which I can *reasonably* expect to *learn* something." In vain might they be told, that they undervalued the talents of the author, and that it was uncandid and invidious to condemn any thing unread. Scorners wish not to retract a depreciating opinion, they have a satisfaction in uttering it, they fancy fastidiousness a proof of superior taste, and pique themselves on not even looking into pages, which their companions have a generous pleasure in commending.

Is the speech of any celebrated orator of the day loudly commended in the presence of a scorner, and his ascent to the universal plaudit required, the reply is, "Why, really, I have heard much better even in these days of false taste and showy ignorance, and I have *read* what the finest modern orator could not only never equal, but, probably, not *understand*;" and if any one replies, "I cannot answer for others, but *I* never heard or read any thing to be compared to the speech in question;" the scorner answers with the shortened lip and drawling tone of exquisite disdain, "I presume you do not read *Demosthenes*."

Gainsborough, the painter, is reported to have

* I must live.

† I do not see the necessity of your living.

said of William Pitt, "That man has a nose turned up at all the world;" but though his nose might be peculiarly calculated to express disdain, I have seen its expression equally strong, where that feature has been strait or hooked; but, to use a strong metaphor, the nose of the mind of the scorner is turned up against almost all things and persons; consequently scorners deprive themselves of one of the sweetest enjoyments of a benevolent mind, that of feeling and expressing admiration. But alas! I fear, that though the few may feel a generous eagerness to admire and praise, the *many* are equally eager and more truly gratified, to discover faults and to express contempt, as exhibited in the following fable.

CARDINAL WOLSEY'S MULE.*

When the 8th Henry rule o'er England held,
And Wolsey's heart with high ambition swell'd,
Leo the 10th, then Pope, a cunning man,
To expedite, 'tis said, some papal plan,
(Some league, I think, he wanted done or undone,)
Cardinal Campeggio sent from Rome to London,
(With our wise Cardinal Wolsey's *leave*, I ween;
For he, of all that ere were seen, [nelles,
From house of Johnny Groat, to straits called Darda-
Was the most great and powerful of Cardinals.)

But *rich* was Wolsey, and Campeggio *poor*;
Too poor to make a show
Fit for his *rank*, I trow;
Therefore, well knowing to ensure respect,
How needful pomp and state were for effect,
Wolsey desired, that by his grooms or guards,
Twelve of his mules should saddled be directly,
And dress'd and bridled, as for him, correctly;
But, not to follow *him*; no—his intent
Was that these mules should be sent off to Kent.

* For the anecdote on which this fable is founded, see Galt's interesting Life of Wolsey.

Then, as to give large gifts he ne'er was loth,
Our Cardinal, of the finest scarlet cloth,
Sent for Campeggio's use some hundred yards.
While thus the Cardinal made this grand beginning,
His grooms in his mules' ears were dinning;
"Get up! ye long-ear'd animals, and trot!
Whether you will or not;
You must not lie here idle;
But take the bit and bridle;
And though you were hard-worked all yesterday,
You must go out again. Up, up, I say;
And ere three days are over,
Be with some great outlandish priest at Dover.

"Was ever cruelty like this, dear brother!"
(One of the mules exclaim'd unto another;)
"But just return'd from a long journey must I
Go out again? No, if I do—" "hush Crusty,"
The other said; "we must obey our lord."
"Not I, indeed, for must's an odious word,
And suits not, slavish sir, the ear of mule;
For obstinate as a mule you know,
Is an old proverb, so I will not go,
Will not submit to tyranny and rule;
And rather than this tyrant priest obey,"
This mule, called Crusty, cried, "*I'll run away.*"

So said, so done; but he again was caught,
And by most heavy stripes obedience taught;
But in his brother's ear he said,
"Mark me! I'll not forget this beating, neighbor:
Nor the commands unreasonable,
Which make me quit the stable,
As soon as I am warm in bed,
And only just come back from other labor,
My task-masters shall rue
The deed which I will do.
And, coute qui coute, though now my rage I smother,
I'll be reveng'd for this some way or other!"

Then, mildly to the bit submitting,
Crusty did all was thought befitting;
And ere Campeggio and his suit were over,

The mules and scarlet cloth arrived at Dover;
The cloth o'er all the mules was to be spread
In flowing draperies of gorgeous red;
And o'er the trunks and coffers,
Which, in defiance of all scoffers,
The people, credulous elves!
As they beheld them strapp'd upon each mule,
Thought of indulgencies were full,
And pardons, too, for their poor, sinful selves;
But, (quite another thing,)
Of costly presents for their sovereign king.

Glad was the Cardinal the mules to see,
And the fine scarlet cloth, and glad was he
To find, as will be readily believ'd,
The English folks could be so soon deceiv'd,
As to imagine trunks which nothing held,
At all worth two-pence, were with treasures swell'd;
And his delight was far beyond expression,
When on, at last, he went in grand procession.
Because they mov'd in such slow time along,
He well could hear the praises of the throng:
For a foot's pace the mules were forc'd to go,
To seem as if their *burthens* made them slow;
But he, the rebel mule, who knew the *truth*,
Crusty, I mean, a most revengeful youth,
He was resolv'd that truth should soon be known,
Howe'er—the sequel I shall tell anon.

Meanwhile, as on they went, what veneration
The sight call'd forth! and some by kneeling,
And crossing of themselves, declar'd their feeling;
Others, by shouts of admiration;
Lo! at Blackheath, nobles and gentlemen,
And prelates too, a splendid scene!
Came in procession all
To meet the Cardinal;
And in the Borough all the clergy came,
Their love and reverence to proclaim!
The livery of London lin'd the street—
A livery *they* with *loyalty* replete,
With heads so soft, and hearts so malleable,
They thought Pope, King, and Cardinal infallible!

The aldermen and great lord mayor,
They too in civic pomp were there,
And did the Cardinal homage; then before
His mule the fam'd Sir Thomas More!
The learn'd the witty,
Well-pleas'd to please the city,
As he the learned languages was pat in,
Spoke a fine speech of welcome all in Latin!
In short, where'er the pleas'd Campeggio rode,
E'en thousands hail'd him as an earthly god;
But, "pride must have a fall," bethought himself,
Crusty, that runaway and beaten elf.

And as I hinted heretofore,
He, knowing what the coffers *really* bore,
Resolv'd to expose the poor and priestly trick;
And just as the procession reach'd Cheapside,
In all the swelling climax of its pride,
Crusty began alarmingly to kick.
Then what disorder in the line was seen;
The mule, with all the force of vengeful spleen,
Threw off his rider and the trunks he bore;
And his example many more
Of his companions quickly follow'd,
Till on the ground were roll'd
The chests, that seem'd with pardons stor'd, and gold;
And while the crowd now hooted, scream'd and hol-
Coffers and trunks flew open in the fall [low'd,
Discovering to the eyes of all,
Instead of treasure-bearing bags,
A mean display of beggary, scraps, and rags;
And holding up to just derision,
Those proofs of priestly craft and imposition.
Oh! it was joy e'en to the shouting crowd.
They, who in cheers and adoration
Had been beyond a doubt most loud,
Were still, I fear, more ready to abuse
Than to admire. Such is the English nation,
Nay, every other too I ween:
For wheresoever social man is seen;
(A truth there's no disputing,)
The crowd would rather choose

To follow e'en their greatest men with hooting,
Than with applauses; this is human nature;
And poor Campeggio, disappointed creature,
Was by a mob of women, men, boys, misses,
Follow'd with hootings, stones, and hisses,
Till, line and order gone, he, helter skelter,
Was glad to go
A grand gallop,
And in the palace find a welcome shelter.
Pleas'd was the vengeful mule;
And he who was no fool,
Observ'd, "I thought their cheers and praises loud;
But when while they applauded,
I kick'd the first deception to the ground."
And thence the admirers found
The hollowness of what they lauded,
The hootings then that rent the air,
And eke the hisses, far, far louder were,
And seem'd to come from them with more good will;
"Hence, I infer," said Crusty to his brother,
"That though men often love to praise each other,
In finding fault they've more enjoyment still."

The SNEERER is next to be treated of.

The SNEERER is of the same family as the scorner, but the scorner disgusts by a sense of his own worth, the *sneerer* by an evident conviction of the defects of others.

The true SNEERER sneers at every body and every thing, even the weather he speaks of with sneering bitterness, as thus: "I suppose some people call this *spring*, but I call it winter." He then takes the opportunity of adding, "yet I met my old friend G. just now without a great coat, affecting to be young." "So your old friend T," says one of his acquaintances, "is made a baronet." "How proper!" he replies, "he should bear the *bloody hand*, as his grandfather was a butcher."

"I hear," says another, "that our friend C. is going to travel." "Who pays his expenses?" replies the *sneerer*. "Himself." "Indeed! if he waited a year or two longer, I dare say he would

be sent abroad at the expense of the government, and for life."

"I find," says some one to a female *sneerer*, (for there are such,) "that Miss M. is going to publish a book." "Very likely," returns the *sneerer*, "for I see she has no time to comb her hair or mend her stockings." "I met William R. and his wife just now in such high spirits," observes another friend. "I conclude it was *after dinner* then," replies the *sneerer*. It is thus true sneerers talk, not like scorners, insinuating their own superiority, but taking a mean pleasure in depreciating whoever and whatever may be named in their presence. Irony is a weapon which *sneerers* are very skilful in using, and it is difficult to know how to conduct one's self with propriety, when one is conscious of being attacked by it. It is more dignified not to betray one's consciousness, that the compliments addressed to us are ironical, but then it is very mischievous to the treacherous utterers of them, as it encourages them to continue the unworthy practice, whereas immediate detection might frighten them into amendment.

But then the exposure must be made with great gentleness and self-command, else avowed or secret hostility is the consequence; and there are few persons who, smarting under the consciousness of intended injury, can coolly reprove and mildly expostulate. Therefore, silence is safest on such occasions, and one must let the flattering traitor suppose one's vanity is so gross, as not to discover the lurking sarcasm and the insidious sneer.

I must add, that *ironical praise* appears to me to proceed from a spirit more deserving than almost any other of the name of *diabolical*.

In the first place, if the speakers expect to have their praise received as sincere, it is a cruel snare to the vanity of the persons addressed, while it exposes them to the derision of the rest of the company, In the second place, if the object of the flat-

tery sees and feels the intended ridicule, a pang is wantonly inflicted on the heart of a fellow-creature, which no human being is warranted to inflict on another—

> "For, let the ungentle spirit learn, from hence,
> A *small unkindness* is a *great offence*."

Before I proceed to the next class of detractors, I beg leave to make a few remarks on some, who seem to have a family likeness to scorners and sneerers, by the frequent use of this phrase, "Oh! for my part, I like nothing but what is *first-rate*."

I never hear this expression without wondering, not only at the arrogant assumption of superior taste in the person speaking, but at their *courage* also in making such a conceited avowal; and when, for my own satisfaction, I have analyzed the talents of the parties. I have found these despisers of mediocrity were not much above mediocrity themselves; no wonder, for real talent is commonly indulgent.

But the declaration has excited my pity; for, as enjoyment is to be derived from every gradation of talent in art, as well as in the beauties of nature, these exclusive admirers of first-rates lose a considerable degree of innocent pleasure, by their superior refinement; and happy, on the contrary, are those, who have an humbler taste.

First-rate conversation is said, and with truth, to be met with chiefly in the circles of the metropolis, because there is the greatest assemblage of conversationalists of distinguished abilities. What objects of pity, then, must the intellectual residents of a country town be, if they could endure no conversation that was not first-rate?

The exertions of provincial artists would be paralyzed, and the advantages of their annual exhibition annihilated, if their fellow-citizens should ever give in to the pretension of not liking any thing but what is called first-rate.

And how much innocent enjoyment would be lost to parents and their children also, if, when the former are wishing and intending to exhibit their performances in art, the persons addressed should observe with a supercilious expression of countenance, "For my part, I never look at any paintings, or drawings, but what are first-rate."

But is this fastidiousness a proof of the superior refinement of taste to which it seems to lay claim? I think not.

Who could believe those persons to be real admirers of the simple melody of the woods, that should declare their contempt of all singing, but that of the nightingate? The lover of the sweet song of birds loves it in all its varieties, and thinks it beautiful in all.

And who could give those critics credit for a real love of painting, who should declare that they could look at no portraits at the exhibition but those of the president and the academicians, because they could not endure any pictures, but what they had reason to conclude were first-rates? since those who have a true feeling of art, and possess a discriminating eye, can find beauties even amongst works by less distinguished exhibitors.

And do they really love poetry who can only read what they consider as first-rate? No, the true lover of it can delight occasionally in a simple ballad, as much as a fine epic, and can enjoy every gradation of verse between those two extremes.

An aptitude to *be pleased* is one of the sweetest sources of sublunary enjoyment; and parents and preceptors would do wisely, I think, to cultivate in their children and pupils indulgent rather than fastidious views not only of men but of things, if it were merely as a means of increasing their pleasurable feelings, and consequently their happiness.

I beg leave to conclude these observations with the following anecdote on the subject of *first-rates*. "I have quite an aversion," said a gentleman one day to a friend of mine, "to every thing not *first-*

rate, especially in poetry, and never read any thing that has not a well-known name attached to it." "I am sorry to hear it," replied my friend, taking a manuscript out of her pocket; "as I have some verses here by an anonymous author, which appear to me to have great merit, perhaps you will oblige me by casting your eye over them."

He complied, but soon returned them saying, "Excuse me! there is not merit here sufficient to induce me to break through my rule. There is nothing *first-rate* here."

"Well," replied the other, "I can only say, that I found these lines in an obscure magazine, and nameless, I maintain, that the best poets of the day might be glad to own them! and the critic and the eulogist parted with, no doubt, a decreased respect for each other's taste and critical acumen.

The verses in question, were those anonymous lines on Sir John Moore's funeral, which Lord Byron was not sorry to have considered to be his; written, as has since been proved, by Charles Wolfe, an Irish clergyman; lines which forced their way out of obscurity into fame by their own power and beauty; and which, now that they have received the meed of universal praise, are no doubt read by the critic above-mentioned, and admitted to be *first-rate*.

Alas! that a wreath of laurel so bright and beautiful never bloomed around the brows of him who earned it, and can only ornament his tomb.

But the consciousness of his pious worth, is a far more precious memorial of him to his surviving friends; and as his character as a Christian gives them assurance of his being removed into a state of enduring felicity, they may find a sweet consolation in twining the palm with his laurels, and rejoice that he is where, instead of the fleeting voice of earthly fame, he is hearing and joining in the choral hymns of the redeemed and the blest.

When I had written thus far concerning *first-rates*, I walked out; but as my mind was full of my

subject, I continued to muse on it, till I reached the place of destination, a neighboring nursery ground.

After choosing some plants, I asked the nursery-man if he could procure for me some roots of the "Forget me not." He said he did not know of such a flower. "It is but a field flower," I replied; describing it and its beauties with great minuteness.

While I stood awaiting an answer, and the person addressed was rubbing his forehead, and trying to recollect the flower, I worked myself up into the expectation of hearing him answer, "Excuse me, madam, I cannot assist you. This is only a field flower, you say, and I deal in nothing but *first-rates*, such as the Camellia Japonica, and Daphne Odora;" but my unpretending companion simply replied, "I am sorry to say, that as I do not know the plant I cannot procure it."

Now to apply this trifling anecdote to my purpose: by being wholly devoted to the care of first-rate plants, my nursery-man was ignorant even of the existence of one of the most beautiful little flowers in the creation; and I doubt not but, on the same principle, professed critics may, if they choose to acquaint themselves with first-rates only, remain ignorant of many works both in painting and poetry, and other branches of art, which are capable of affording them no inconsiderable delight. There are *field* flowers on the Parnassian Mount as well as those of a more lofty description; and the real lovers of the simple beauties of nature will stoop to admire and gather them, even in the presence of prouder productions of the soil.

Often have I gathered and demanded admiration for the "Forget me not," from those who were admiring the flowers of the garden; and I feel inclined to make a smilar appeal to the fastidious and high-minded, who profess to disdain every thing not *first-rate*, in behalf of those humbler works, in all branches of the arts which may be called their

field flowers. The blue stars of the scorpion grass are as finely formed as the large compact flower of the Camellia Japonica—yet, to be consistent, the lover of first-rates only should turn away from the simple "Forget me not," and only desire to gaze on the cultivated rose of Japan. Circumstances, interesting to myself alone, have made this little flower particularly dear to me; I have therefore chosen it to illustrate the foregoing position.

But it has for me a charm, independent of its blue and starry beauty. "Forget me not," the name it bears in Germany, makes it a fit flower to deck a burial ground, and I intend that it shall bloom on the grave of the being whom I loved best, and I am desirous that it should also bloom upon my grave beside him.*

I have endeavored to prove in this long division of my subject, that GOSSIPS, though not the worst of detractors, must be the most incorrigible, because by letting down their minds, by idle habits, they are become incapable of improvement.

That TALKERS-OVER are the most numerous of detractors, because in them are included one's own and every body's acquaintance.

That LAUGHERS-AT are nearly related to those that "sit in the seat of the scornful."

That the eye of the laugher-at seems always full of satirical laughter, which is not always kept in till its object is out of hearing.

That where there are many brothers and sisters

* The botanical name of this oft mistaken flower, the real "Forget me not," is twofold. The large sort is the Myosotis Palustur; the larger is Myorotis Arvensis, or mouse-eared Scorpion Grass; the one grows in marshes, the other in fields. It has five bright *sky blue* petals, with a bright yellow middle; some of the buds are of a *pink* hue. The larger sort of this plant, flowers and grows in such great abundance on the banks of the Wye and the Thames, that it forms masses of *blue;* and were it capable of growing in the soil of a garden, it would be one of its most beautiful ornaments.

in a family, a habit of laughing at others is often only too easily acquired.

That habitual satirical laughter in woman is likely to interfere with her prospects in life.

That QUIZZERS may be of the family of banterers, but that quizzing itself is so vulgar and disagreeable, that I shall not give a definition of it.

That BANTERERS begin with good-humored jokes, but end commonly with making a butt of some one in the company; and then their raillery becomes offensive.

That the banterer is sometimes met by another banterer, and conquered, and then woe to the banterer; as the bantered, who had been the victim of the first banterer, have no mercy on him.

That NICKNAMERS are prominent detractors, but more amusing and less offensive than some others. But that nicknaming is a vulgar habit and proceeds from a satirical spirit.

That by STINGERS I mean, those who inflict as sudden stings on the mind and feelings, as a little fly called a midge, inflicts on the body, especially if the objects of their attack have mortified their self-love, by having been in successful competition with themselves, or any of their connections.

That SCORNERS are necessarily and always detractors. That they have no respect for any abilities but their own. That in secret, however, they probably are envious of the successful talents which they seem to despise. That scorners are, from their appearance of ineffable conceit, the most ungraceful and offensive of detractors.

That the SNEERER does not disgust like the scorner, by a sense of his own worth, but by an expressed conviction of the defects of others. That he has an habitual pleasure in detracting. That

irony is a favorite weapon of the sneerer, and that ironical praise is one of the most difficult things to bear as one ought.

That for any one to say, "I can only bear what is FIRST-RATE," looks like excessive conceit and arrogant pretensions; and that for one's own sake and comfort, as well as of others, we ought to cultivate a capability of being pleased with what is *not* first-rate.

And I conclude with an anecdote relative to myself, to illustrate the latter position.

CHAPTER X.

ON PRACTICAL DETRACTION.

I AM now come to the class of PRACTICAL DETRACTORS, and I shall give them a chapter to themselves.

I shall begin with the EYE-INFLICTERS.

I originally stated, that detraction is of *two kinds*, and that there are detracting looks and actions, as well as words.

To these detractors by looks, I give the name of EYE-INFLICTERS.

This noun I have derived from a verb invented, I believe, by Dr. Parr.

I have often heard Dr. Parr say, "*I inflicted my eye* on such a one!" meaning, that having happened to meet a public character who had, in his opinion, forfeited his political integrity, he had fixed his powerful eye upon him, as if he would look him through, in order to make his conscience tremble at the piercing glance of an honorable and consistent man; and, in humble imitation of this learned example, I have ventured to make the word *eye-inflicter*. But different from the virtuous indignation expressed by Dr. Parr's powerful eye, is the mean warfare waged against the feelings by the EYE-INFLICTER. The glance of the eye-inflicters, in my sense of the term, wanders with a keen, minutely-searching glance over the whole person and dress, as if in order to discover faults and negligences; and it sometimes settles on us with a cold, cruel expression, which is deeply felt, but cannot be described.

The eye-inflicter, then, usually seeks the kindred glance of another of the species, in a near relative

or intimate companion; and they convey the look of ridicule backwards and forwards, from one eye to the other, till, against the unfortunate object of their tongueless but evident satire, an external warfare is carried on by a sort of battledore and shuttlecock process from glance to glance, while the helpless victim feels certain of being laughed at, though nought but kind words may proceed from the eye-inflicter's lips.

Can any one deny, who reads this description, that they have not, at some period of their lives, undergone the torture of this eye-infliction? There is another species of practical detraction, connected with eye-infliction, which I have before alluded to; namely, that of *shrugs*, *winks*, and other actions of the kind.

It is in the power of any person, by winks of the eye, by shrugs of the shoulders, by shakes, and nods of the head, and the occasional judicious elevation of the hands, to stamp any narrator of a story, in any company, with the brand of *falsehood*. Incredulity staring from the lifted eye, sneering from the shortened upper lip, and speaking, as it were, from the nodding head and the shrugging shoulders! And what is this but detraction? which, though acted and not uttered, is sufficient for the purpose intended, that of depreciating and injuring its, perhaps, unconscious and innocent object. With the following appropriate lines from Childe Harold I shall conclude my subject.

"From mighty wrongs, to petty perfidy,
Have I not seen what human things could do?
From the loud roar of foaming calumny,
To the small whisper of the as paltry few,
And subtler venom of the reptile crew,
The *Janus glance of whose significant eye,*
Learning to lie with silence, would *seem* true,
And without utterance, save the shrug or sigh,
Deal round to happy fools its speechless obloquy."

MIMICKS, on whom I must now comment, combine *both* species of detraction—the uttered as well as the acted, and can, therefore, boast a double power to lower their fellow-creatures, and make them subservient to their will and pleasure, whether they will or no.

Accomplished mimicks possess a privilege like that of the magicians of old, and can not only raise up before our eyes the face, actions, and the manner, of the absent and the dead, but can bring the sound of their voices to our ears. Sometimes, the delusion of mimicking is perfect; I mean, it is so free from exaggeration and caricature, that even the mimicked would scarcely have been offended, had they been hearers or witnesses of it. But this, indeed, is mimickry on its good behavior, and in its holiday garb; on common occasions, and in its *working* dress, caricature and exaggeration are its meat and drink, the spirit of detraction is its soul, and its object, mischievous ridicule.

A talent for mimickry is a very dangerous snare; and to possess and not to use it is one of the most enviable triumphs of good principle. There is scarcely any talent whose exertion gives so much pleasure. It not only gratifies the vanity of the mimick, but gratifies that of the hearers; for a good piece of mimickry is a sort of conundrum or charade; it is a something to exercise one's ingenuity in *guessing*, and happy those who can first exclaim, "Oh! how like! I never saw such a likeness!"

And how difficult it is, when we are in company with professed mimicks, to abstain from tempting them to do what one considers to be wrong, by asking them to give a specimen of their powers. Departed public characters may be considered as fair subjects for this power to be exercised upon; and were the mimick to stop there, it might be narrow and absurd to disapprove the exhibition. But the permitted *use* of a thing often leads to its *abuse;* the mimick would be tempted to go on, and exhibit the

living as well as the dead; private persons would succeed, in the mimick's magic lantern, to public characters; the audience, too much amused to reprove, would encourage, by their laughter and their praise, to further daring, till acquaintances, friends, and, probably, *relations*, would be made to join in this new "*dance of death*;" for such exhibitions may well be said to consist of the wounded and the maimed; and the sweet confidences, the holy trusts of private and domestic life, are broken up and destroyed; for what must appear to the hearers and spectators, on *reflection*, a heartless and an ungenerous enjoyment.

I have said *on reflection*, for there is such a charm about perfect imitations of this nature, it is only when the exhibition is over, that we can be alive to the real *meanness* of the display, and to the self-blame to which it ought to lead.

It is mean, because it is treacherous; and it is treacherous, because such displays can only take place in the absence and without the knowledge of the persons exhibited; as such exhibitions would not only be uncalled for in their presence, but the mimick, if called upon, would not dare to comply.

That exertion of talent which, in order to be safe, must depend on the *secrecy* of those who witness it, because, if known to the persons on whom it is exerted, it might call forth in them pain and mortification, together with lasting hatred to the mimick, if a woman, and personal chastisement to the offender, if a man, cannot be beheld, on reflection, with aught but serious disapproval, by a religious, or even by a merely moral being. But whence is it that most, if not all, persons are more offended and hurt at being *taken off*, as it is called, than by being unjustly spoken of, severely censured, or even made the subjects of defamation? because such is the weakness of human nature, that it shrinks more from *personal* ridicule, and from what seems to call in question our powers to please, in looks, voice, manner and gesture, than from any

imputed want of morals and conduct. Hence it is that mimicks, though often the most courted, are the most *dreaded* of companions; and though the most amusing of our acquaintance, are the most distrusted and *disliked* also, and that they are considered as the most formidable detractors in society, because one can scarcely help admitting that they are the most entertaining.

And if it be permitted to any one to rejoice in witnessing the administration of retributive justice, it must be when notorious and unsparing mimicks are mimicked in their turn, and held up to the laughter and the ridicule, which they have so often called forth on others. But, for this retribution to be complete, it should be *witnessed* by the offenders themselves; and then, perhaps, they too might be taught to remember the precept which they had hitherto *despised*—"Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you." If I should be asked whether I do not believe, that mimickry may take place where there is neither general nor particular competition, I must answer, yes; because actors, singers, preachers, orators, are often mimicked in society, with whom *unprofessional* mimicks can come neither into general nor *particular* competition; but the case is different when the mimickry is employed on private individuals; for then, I doubt not, that the mimick exerts his power on particular persons, and is asked so to employ them from a desire to lower them, and *see* them lowered, existing in himself, or those who require him to exert his talent for their amusement.

It is a remarkable fact, that I have never known a single mimick who, from some defect in articulation, some peculiar tone of voice, or some provincial yet characteristic habit of speaking, was not liable to be mimicked even with more than common facility; and I have been forcibly reminded, on such occasions, of the old proverb, "Those whose heads are made of glass, should be careful how they throw stones."

Before I quit this subject, I must venture to address some words of friendly admonition to the young of both sexes; especially those in whom the tendency to satirize and ridicule is not easily kept within due bounds.

A satirical detracting spirit is a worldly spirit; and in nothing does it show itself more than in the *critical spirit* with which some who go regularly to their place of worship, listen to what they hear there.

Public performers of all descriptions may be just objects of criticism to those who frequent public places; and at public meetings of various kinds, the speakers may be commented upon, if judged with candor, and with a willingness to approve, and a reluctance to condemn. But it is not with a critical spirit that we are to enter the house of worship.

It is desirable, undoubtedly, that all teachers of the word should be able to give it in a voice and manner calculated to allure the attention and gratify the taste; but there is a gift far beyond them in value: namely, that of heartfelt piety, and a power of uttering "the deep things of God," even though it be in "weakness, fear, and trembling," and those who enter a place of worship in a proper frame of mind, look not at the manner, because they become absorbed in the matter; nor will such be disposed to congregate after the church service is over, and the meeting broken up, with those who are of a mocking spirit, and who take an unworthy pleasure in pointing out the defects of the preachers, while some of them, perhaps, add offensive mimickry to their ill-felt criticism.

This sort of mimickry, that of preachers of the gospel, is by far the most offensive; for it not only is casting ridicule upon holy things, but it shows in what an improper state of mind the listeners were, when uniting apparently, with their fellow-christians in religious duties; and proves that they were marking for their prey the defects of pious

teachers, whom they afterwards accosted, probably, with seeming love and reverence, but from whom they turned away with a proud consciousness how well they had learnt *to play them off*, at no very distant moment, for the amusement of others, and the gratification of their own vanity.

Nor is this treachery the worst part of the mimick's offence: even the least spiritual of public preachers, whatever be their denomination, do not use in their church or meeting-house the same language as at the dinner-table; and if not holding up to their hearers' view the terrors of death and judgment, their subjects are at least too serious and important to be made the objects of ridicule. Therefore, what does the mimick of preachers do? He utters with mocking lips words which relate to things which ought never to be named with derision, by real or even *seeming* Christians.

He utters in a deriding spirit what he knows was spoken with the *holiest;* and thereby offends not only against the unconscious object of his mimickry, but against HIM of whom the preacher probably spoke; and what is still more culpable, the mimick uttered words which he, in his secret heart, perhaps, believed were taught by HIM, the Holy One of Israel! Now the mimick is either a believer, or he is not. If he does not believe, a preacher or teacher of the word of God is not more sacred in his eyes than another man, nor are the words he speaks.

But if he be a convinced Christian, the case is otherwise, and it is certain he would resent being requested by any one to read a chapter in the Bible or a prayer in a way so peculiar as to excite the laughter of his audience. Yet, what does the mimick do when he imitates preachers? He puts serious, and perhaps scriptural words into their mouths; words, listened to not as the vehicle of holy thoughts, and awakeners to holy feelings, but in order to excite admiration of his powers of mim-

ickry, and, probably, laughter at the expense of the mimicked.

These exhibitions may sometimes be simple portraits and not caricatures, but how soon the portrait may become a caricature; a sudden feeling of mischievous pleasantry may come over the mimick, he may exaggerate defects into ludicrous deformity, till bursts of laughter reward his exertions, and the profanation is complete.

This may *rarely* happen; but the circumstances should never exist that make it possible it *ever* should happen. The principle, the practice, the example, are alike wrong, and though those who are of a light and frivolous turn of mind, may not be more averse to mimick preachers than public men of any other description, the *believer* should consider deeply before he yields to the temptation, because by such mimickry, he not only does all he can to lower the Lord's devoted servants, and give those who hear them ludicrous associations with their ministry, but he also profanes the words which he professes to believe holy, and exposes himself to the digraceful suspicion of being an infidel in his heart, and that his religious profession is mere worldly conformity.

CARICATURISTS are next on my list of practical detractors; but it is only one branch of caricature that deserves to be called detraction: namely, that of personal caricatures of public or private persons; and this species of caricaturists is not higher in the scale of society than the mere mimick, and is perhaps the inflicter of far greater suffering, if his efforts be ever seen by the subject of them; as there is no doubt that on the subject of personal appearance, all persons are more alive to animadversion and ridicule than on any other. But the caricaturist who employs his talents not on the species, but the genus; not on persons, but things; not on fools, but follies; not on the individuals who dress in the extremes of fashion, but on the fashion itself; and thus endeavor "to shoot folly as it flies,"

these men of observing minds and powerful pencils have a right to be ranked with the moral satirists in prose and poetry of this and other ages, though they may be a grade below them. Some of the caricatures of the late Henry Bunbury, and those of Cruikshank of the present day, entitle the artists not only to praise for their genius, but for its application also. There is one caricature which tells so much in such a small space, and is so completely the *multum in parvo*, that I cannot forbear to mention it. I know not who the artist was, but the engraving is a man in rags, his hands in his empty pockets, his face long and haggard, his mouth making a ghastly attempt at a laugh, and underneath is written, "I have gained my suit!"

I shall only further observe that those who caricature private individuals, and make their defects of face and person the subject of their satirical pencil, are even more unamiable and defective in benevolent feelings and principle, than the mimick, and their effects are far more lastingly injurious, since a drawing remains, and can be shown to hundreds, but a piece of mimickry can only be heard where the mimick happens to be present. There is another reason why the mimick is less reprehensible than the caricaturist, though his spirit is the same; namely, that contortions of face and form, and particularly in speech, may be remembered and even entirely gotten rid of, if judiciously pointed out; and many persons, especially those whose deformities proceed either from affectation or awkwardness, might derive essential benefit from hearing and seeing themselves mimicked. But, the power of the caricaturist lies in exhibiting with increased ugliness personal and natural defects, which no human power can remove, and which, therefore, no benevolent being can take pleasure in holding up to ridicule. Therefore, though the caricaturist of individuals is second on my list of detractors, he is not behind any of them, in his powers to wound; but I must venture, how-

ever hopelessly, to suggest that it is a pity such talents as the caricaturist must possess, (or he could not draw caricatures,) should not be employed in holding up follies to the ridicule they deserve, and in *general* and not *particular* exhibitions.

I have included, but I hope not unjustly EPIGRAMMATISTS on my list of detractors, and with them it finishes.

Epigram writers, like caricaturists of persons, inflict more pain than the mimick, because their performances are *lasting* and *transferable* from one to another. Those who can speak severe things possess a dangerous gift, but those who can write them, one more dangerous still; and there is something so alluring in the talent of writing epigrams, both to those who write and to those who read them, that nothing but the most powerful of restraining motives can stop the pen of the former from writing, and the tongue of the latter from applauding.

Bonmots and epigrams are often well-turned compliments only;* still, bitter sarcasm is the soul of genuine repartee and genuine epigram,† and the latter is often the very essence of detraction if not of defamation.

* The following elegant lines, not generally known, illustrate this sort of epigram.

Epigram by a barrister of the name of Madan, handed up to a young lady who was attending the Huntingdon Assizes.

While petty offences and felonies smart,
Is there no jurisdiction for stealing a heart?
You, fair one, will smile, and say, *laws! I defy you!*
Convinc'd that no *peers* can be summon'd to try you;
But think not that specious pretence will secure ye,
The muses and graces *just make up a jury.*

† I subjoin an epigram of the other class, as no one's feelings can be injured by the insertion, since the objects of its satire have long been dead, and its amiable author also.

At an Annual Meeting held during many years, at the late Sir John and Lady Miller's Villa, at Bath Easton, the latter instituted prizes for the best poetical contributions, which were put

As the mind of the epigram writer and the caricaturist are of the same sort, these talents are often possessed by the same individuals; and sometimes fatal is the possession to success in greater things. The praise, accompanied, and perhaps excited, by fear of being the next victim, which rewards the efforts of the epigram writers and caricaturists, elevates them into a dangerous height in their own estimation, and by giving them a sense of ability and power sufficient to gratify their vanity at the moment, tends to circumscribe their ambition. Why should they toil to obtain further distinction, when, in the circles in which they move, they are looked up to as wits and artists? They can but be admired; and the salutary wish to obtain excellence of a higher sort is consequently annihilated, and they go on through life satisfied with their apparent success, openly applauded, but probably secretly feared, and therefore *disliked.* And mark them as they increase in years! their detracting spirit growing greater as their power to prove it becomes less, till at last, like the angry cur, they can only growl, where they could formerly bite; and the minds which, if not early tempted by the easiness and immediateness of success attendant on the efforts of the moment, might have proved a benefit and a blessing to others, fade away, and go out in uncomfortableness and gloom, mourning over the consciousness that they can neither amuse

anonymously into a vase, bearing the following inscription from Virgil:—

"*Noctes atque dies patet atra janua Ditis.*"
"The gates of hell are open night and day."

Miller! the urn in ancient times, 'tis said,
Held the collected ashes of the dead;
So thine, the wonder of these modern days,
Stands open day and night for *lifeless lays.*
Leave not unfinished then, the well-formed plan,
Complete the work thy classic taste began;
And, oh! in future, ere thou dost inurn 'em,
Remember first to raise a pile and burn 'em.

nor hurt any longer; and the satirical observation, the ready malice, the active envy, and the jealous spite, which, working together in their minds in youth, produced the phosphoric brilliancy of the epigram and caricature—convert, alas! into a dark, offensive, increasing mass of malignant feelings, of the same nature as those in former days, but the shining vapors which they once produced are vanished for ever.

It is possible to envy wits of this description when they are young; but if we see and hear them in their decay, the only feeling which they can excite is salutary and warning compassion.

"Point d'ennemis ma fille," "Have no enemies, daughter," said the Marchioness de Sévigné to the Countess de Grignan, in one of her letters. Excellent advice! but if it was ever given to an epigrammatist, it was probably given in vain; and few persons have made more enemies than the known writer of epigrams.

Yet, there have been minds powerful and Christian enough to forgive injuries of this kind, and I have pleasure in relating the following anecdote. It is in the field of epigram that academical students of poetical talents usually try their first strength; and some of the best epigrams which I ever read were written by Cambridge scholars, who have since distinguished themselves in the higher branches of literature.* A member of one of the colleges, who was well known for his wit, and who, though no longer a student, was a resident at Cambridge, wrote an epigram on the late Bishop Watson, then residing there also, which was handed about and greatly admired.

Soon after, the epigram-writer, being desirous of obtaining a particular office in the University, called to solicit the vote of the bishop. "What, Sir!" exclaimed the prelate, "do you come to ask me to vote for you? Answer me, Sir, did you not write a

* Particularly Archdeacon Wr—.

certain epigram?" The poor wit blushed, stammered, and with difficulty confessed that he *did*. "Very well, Sir; very well," returned the bishop; "but it does not matter whether you did or not, I think you fit for the place; you shall, therefore, have *my vote*."

It is gratifying to write, and it is pleasant, no doubt, to read a good epigram; but most persons, I trust, had rather have acted like Bishop Watson on this occasion, than have written like his satirist.

I shall now say in recapitulation, that EYE-INFLICTERS are practical detractors, and that I have made this noun out of a verb, "to inflict the eye upon a person," used by Dr. Parr.

That EYE-INFLICTERS seek the kindred glances of some near relative or intimate friend and then convey the look of satirical meaning backwards and forwards from one eye to the other, like a battledore and shuttlecock.

That there is another species of detraction connected with eye-infliction,—that of shrugs, winks and sighs.

That any person by this process can stamp a narrator of a story with the brand of falsehood, and what is this but detraction?

That MIMICKS are guilty of both kinds of detraction—detraction acted as well as spoken.

That mimickry is sometimes, I own, no more than an imitation, and would not offend even its object; but that this is mimickry on its good behavior.

That the CARICATURIST not of fools but of folly ranks only a grade below the satirists in prose and in verse, and that such a caricaturist was the late Sir Henry Bunbury, and is George Cruikshank.

Lastly, that EPIGRAMMATISTS are even more pleasing detractors than caricaturists, and like them more wounding than mimicks or mimickry; as epigrams, as well as caricatures, endure and may be handled about.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE VOCABULARY OF DETRACTION.

HAVING defined its various kinds, I shall now give what I call the Vocabulary of Detraction.

I have found by experience how useful it is to watch the effect of the words we use on ourselves, and observe how much our feelings are under the power even of our own tones and language. I have been surprised to find how much the utterance of a severe word has increased my feeling of resentment towards offending individuals, and how entirely my anger has been subdued when I have unintentionally, perhaps, mentioned them soon after, in words and tones of compassion.

If this be true, those who wish to live in amity with their neighbors and fellow-citizens, should be careful to avoid injurious language respecting them even in joke; for it is impossible to feel proper respect and esteem for our associates, of whom we accustom ourselves to speak with nicknames, or with any depreciating epithet; such epithets as are found in the following list.

The fellow, the old fellow, mother such a one, and old mother such a one, the old girl, the old maid, and that Mr. Such a one, or that man, or Miss Such a one, or that Tom so and so, or Mary so and so, and that thingimy such a one, thingumbob, or that what's the man's name, or that what's the woman's name? or the quiz, and other lowering expressions, which, whenever or by whomsoever uttered, are uttered, I venture to assert, in the true spirit of detraction. It may be objected, that some of these expressions, especially the terms "mother such a one," and "old mother such a one," are too

vulgar to be used by any one in a decent situation in life; but I have heard them from the lips of those who would indignantly repel the charge of vulgarity; but let their rank in society be ever so high, all persons who are under the influence of bad temper, and the wish to indulge in petty detraction, are, for the time being at least, reduced to the level of the vulgar, and liable to indulge in vulgar phraseology.

There is nothing absolutely vulgar in the use of the relative "that" before a name; but I know no word so applied more detracting and contemptuous. There is nothing defined in the idea which it gives; it is only censure by *implication;* still, I can conceive no surer way of lowering the person spoken of, and at a very cheap rate, as it costs the person speaking no expenditure of wit, judgment, power of reasoning, or discrimination. It may also be considered as a throwing down of the satirical gauntlet, and as the provoker to detraction in others and a *that* before a name is almost as degrading as an *alias* after it, except that the first is a sort of indistinct degradation, and the other conveys a charge of specific delinquency. "The fellow" also bespeaks a decided sense of superiority in the person speaking to the person spoken of; and though a wicked fellow, and a good for nothing fellow are terms of a more seriously calumniating inference, yet they are not so contemptuous as the simple expression of "the *fellow*," if spoken otherwise than in pleasantry; and if one changes the "the" for the "that" a very easy and common change, language has scarcely a combination of words more capable of giving a severe wound to a fellow-creature's respectability. "Ah! he is a sad chap! and he is quite a quiz!" are two phrases much used in the grammar of detraction, and are common all over England, in the vulgar tongue, though neither "chap" nor "quiz" are words in the dictionary. I know not the origin of either word from any good authority; but, as calling a man a *chap* implies usually that he is but a sorry fellow, I am inclined to

believe it is derived from the French word, *échappé*, escaped, meaning a man who has narrowly escaped hanging; and I think *un échappé du diable* is a French phrase, equivalent to our *scape grace*. A quiz, or a person of ludicrous and particular appearance and manners, is a word of recent invention, and I should suppose that it is a *jumble* of queer and *exquis*, or exquisite; however, be that as it may, neither chap nor quiz, any more than quizzer or quizzing, should have been mentioned here, had they not been, beyond a doubt, words of frequent use in the mouths of detractors, and common weapons in the mean, useless, mischievous, unintellectual, heartless, and never-ending warfare of detraction.

I must now add in recapitulation, that I have given the Vocabulary of Detraction, or words used by detractors; and I have found it useful to watch the effect of my own words and tones on *myself*, in speaking of *others*.

CHAPTER XII.

ON SOME OF THE MOST PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF DETRACTION, AUTHORESSES, BLUE-STOCKINGS, MEDICAL MEN, CONVERTS TO SERIOUS RELIGION.

HAVING now described the different classes of detractors and their vocabulary, I shall point out some of the most prominent OBJECTS OF DETRACTION; and though all persons who venture from the safe circles of private life into public competition, are liable to provoke envy and severity of observation, still, I believe that AUTHORESSES and BLUE-STOCKINGS are amongst the most favorite subjects of detraction in the private circles in which they move. I shall endeavor to pass as lightly as possible over the former subject, as I feel I am treading on difficult and dangerous ground; yet I must hazard a few observations.

An authoress I am, and must remain so; but, unlike the fox in the fable, who having lost his tail endeavored to persuade his brother foxes to cut off theirs, on the false plea that he had found this loss a great convenience, I must frankly declare that had I known the pains and dangers which awaited me when I became a public authoress, nothing but a strong sense of duty, or the positive want of bread, could have induced me to encounter them.

"Never," said a highly-gifted though misguided French woman of mournful celebrity, "never had I the slightest intention of becoming an author. I perceived very early in life, that a woman who gained this title lost a great deal more than she acquired; men do not love her and women criticise: if her works be bad, she is ridiculed, and not without reason; if good, her right to them is disputed."

I believe what she has here stated, to be a general rule, to which there are few exceptions. And what follows from the same enlightened mind, I would commend to the attention of those women of talents, who as yet, though strongly tempted, may not have ventured into the arena of public authorship. "Happy in having it in their power to improve their understanding, women are not bound to communicate what they acquire; what could they say that others do not know better than they? Their sex and their duties keep them equally under a veil, where they more certainly find happiness than in the midst of the *illusions* which lead them to show themselves." Illusions indeed! if the object of the female writer be to increase her social happiness; for in no possible way can an increase of that be the result of her authorship.

If her object be to maintain the beloved relations dependent on her by the exertion of her pen, even then, though a sense of duty well filled, may shed peace upon her pillow, she must work early and late, against her inclination as much as with it, and after all, gain only a hard-earned and usually a scanty maintenance; and if fame be consciously or unconsciously the end in view, she may find, as I have before observed, that she has purchased it at the expense of peace. She has avowed a wish, and perhaps displayed an ability, to obtain distinction, which have lifted her above the bounded sphere in which she moved; and neither the success nor the attempt are ever entirely forgotten or forgiven: and what degree of fame can make either man or woman amends for any curtailment of the safe and tender affection that exists for them in the bosom of their family and the scenes of their youth? And have not many of both sexes who have been called into public competition, been made to feel that their wreaths are combined of thorns as well as laurels, and that when they sought public distinction, they endangered their *private peace?*

How admirably has that charming writer, Felicia

Hemans, expressed the comparative emptiness of *woman's* fame especially, and its want of power to confer happiness, in the concluding lines of her CORINNA AT THE CAPITOL.

> "Crown'd of Rome, O! art thou not
> Happy in that glorious lot?
> Happier, happier far, than thou,
> With the laurel on thy brow,
> She that makes the humble hearth
> Happy, but to *one on earth.*"

And again in her admirable Records of Woman, at the conclusion of her Joan of Arc in Rheims:—

> "Bought alone, by gifts beyond all price,
> The trusting heart's repose, the Paradise,
> Of home, with all its loves, doth fate allow
> The crown of glory unto woman's brow."

But if the female writer who tries to amuse, and hopes to insinuate some serious moral truths through the medium of the entertainment, be permitted to pass unavoided and unhated to her grave, it is far otherwise with those who endeavor to *teach* others; those who venture to drag besetting sins into the light of day, to call things by the right name, to denominate *permitted worldly policy*, the *spirit and practice of lying*, and to point out in all their deformity the *obliquities of temper.*

The author, but more especially the authoress, who presumes to do this, must prepare to be disliked, cavilled at, and depreciated; must be satisfied to be judged, without being even read through; must submit to be misquoted and misrepresented; and be deeply thankful, if she can find consolation under the trial inflicted, in the consciousness of having written from what she deemed the requirings of painful duty to her fellow-creatures, and that the labors which have given her such mingled feelings of satisfaction and suffering, have bestowed

unmixed pleasure on one whom she tenderly loved, and have also beguiled her chequered path of life, of many a weary and many a dangerous hour.

I know it may be said, that if the giver of all good has bestowed even on woman the power of writing, she is justified in exerting it; and if she modestly writes and publishes anonymously, she may instruct and amuse without compromising her delicacy, or incurring the disadvantages of authorship; but I fear that is not the case. Even to the dearest and nearest few who may be in her secret, a published, though anonymous authoress, appears often in an unpleasing as well as a new light. It is as if she had assumed a novel and unbecoming costume. "And so you are turned *authoress*," will very likely be said to her with a sarcastic emphasis, while the poor conscious culprit feels as if she had really committed a crime.

The abstract idea of an authoress in ancient days was a dirty, ill-dressed, ragged, snuffy-nosed woman, who could not perform any of the common and necessary duties of her sex; could not or would not talk of common things, and who carried upon her garments, her manner, and probably her fingers, the badge of authorship! And with the exception of the snuffy nose, the peculiar dress and manner, and the inky fingers, such still continues to be, amongst most men, and many women, the abstract idea of a female writer. And let it continue so! they have a pleasure in indulging it, and those

> "Who are convinc'd against their will,
> Are of the same opinion still."

But even amongst the candid and the liberal of both sexes, and even in a metropolis, which may be called the earthly paradise of authors and authoresses, since in its best circles, it is a name by which it is an honor, and not a disgrace, to be known, and is the surest passport also into some of its highest and most intellectual assemblies, even

there, I believe, that the very highest praise which could be given to a female writer would be, "she is really an agreeable woman, and I never should have guessed she was an authoress."

But I have lingered too long on this nearly to me *forbidden ground.* And I shall only add that, in my humble opinion, the result of long and often bitter experience, not only the authoress but the author, whose chief and dearest aim in writing is to call the attention of those in whom they are interested, to the contemplation of the most important topics, would do well not to reside in the busy haunts of men. The assumption of the power to teach can only be forgiven and admitted, while the pretender is personally unknown or living in retirement. The oracles delivered at Delphos would not have been acted upon as such at Rome, had not they been delivered from a neighboring tripod, and from a native priest; and this the Romans, who knew the human heart, were fully aware of: "familiarity breeds contempt," is a proverb founded on the experience of ages. Generally speaking, the inhabitants of mountainous countries see nothing to admire in those scenes which persons at a distance go many a mile to gaze upon; and I believe that, without being actuated by the envy and dislike occasioned by the sense of assumed superiority, the near relations and familiar friends of authors may conscientiously see nothing to admire in them or their works, may wonder to find that they are courted by others, and that their writings are received with approbation by the public. But there is one consolation and one stimulus to continued though apparently vain exertion; namely, the hope that when the hand that held the warning pen is cold, and the anxious heart can beat no more, the pages of instruction which are now despised, where the writers were most desirous that they should be kindly appreciated, will then be perused with more indulgent attention; that the infirmities, and per-

haps disagreeableness of the writers, will be pardoned and forgotten, when they can offend no more, and that if their pages contain religious or moral truth, by which the reader could be taught and amended, their pride of heart, which led them to resist it before, will then be softened into admission of it; the good which the departed writers in their life-time vainly wished to do, will at length be done; and then, however they might be despised in their lives, after death they may be deemed worthy of grateful respect, and their memories be loved and honored.

I am now going to plead the cause of that calumniated body of women, yclept BLUE-STOCKINGS.

The published authoress is a notorious offender, and must take the consequences of her daring; but the mere blue-stocking seems to me a respectable, rational, and innocent person, who often suffers for erroneously-imputed guilt, being mistaken for what she is not; namely, an authoress. The two things are, originally, wholly distinct; but, though the authoress is not a blue-stocking, it is possible that the blue-stocking may become an authoress; just as a solicitor, though not originally a barrister, may, if he chooses, become one in the end.

I shall now give as true a history of blue-stockingism as my scanty means will furnish.

About the year 1784 and 86, some ladies and gentlemen of rank, fashion, and literary taste, agreed to assemble at each other's houses, for the purposes of rational conversation; and at these parties, persons of every description of genius were kindly welcomed. I have been frequently told, from what appeared to me good authority, that the society owed its peculiar name to the homely dress of one of the visiters; namely, that highly-gifted, but eccentric being, James Barry, Professor of Painting to the Royal Academy, who was at that time employed on his admirable pictures in the great room of the Adelphi, and used to go to this

assembly of the high-born and the intellectual, in the same dress in which he painted; in short, he appeared there in his worsted blue stockings.*

It so happened, that when a foreigner of rank, who was only just arrived in London, refused to accompany a friend to one of their parties, on the plea of being in his travelling deshabille, the gentleman replied, "Oh! we never mind dress on these occasions; you may come in *bas-bleus*, or *blue-stockings*," alluding to the usual undress of Barry: the foreigner, fancying that *bas-bleus* were part of the necessary costume, called the meeting ever after, the *bas-bleu society*.

The ladies and gentlemen, of whom it was composed, were not all authors and authoresses, but they were fond of literature and literary company, and had the good sense to endeavor to collect together the distinguished in all arts and sciences, without regard to their condition in life.

On these occasions, that awful ugly thing, a large circle in an English drawing-room, exhibiting, as it usually does, the men sitting together on one side of the room, and the women on the other, was wisely broken into groups of various sizes; nor, in London meetings for the purpose of conversation, has it ever been resumed. It is only in provincial circles that this remnant of barbarism is still suffered to exist; awing the timid into intercourse with their next neighbor only, encouraging the supercilious man to talk chiefly to the male friend next him, and enabling the indolent to indulge in the same practice, though from a different motive. A lady of the name of Vesey was the original promoter of this successful attempt to put down the universal practice of card-playing, by the introduction of conversation parties; and she was assisted in her efforts by the widow of Admiral Boscawen, and by the celebrated Elizabeth Montague,

* It is also said, that *Dr. Stillingfleet*, not Barry! was the cause of this appellation.

the writer of an essay on Shakspeare, and of a collection of letters, distinguished for their wit and elegance. This benevolent lady was equally well-known as the giver of a dinner every *May-day*, in the garden belonging to her house in Portman-square, to all the chimney-sweepers in London. These ladies met alternately at each other's houses; and amongst their visiters were Lord Lyttleton, Horace Walpole, and other celebrated men of the day; and amongst the female writers, who were then already known to fame, were Elizabeth Carter, the translator of Epictetus, and the admirable Hannah More, from whose poem, called the Bas-bleu, published in the year 1786, I shall give some extracts, which will be more to the purpose than any thing I can say.

My readers will see that the advertisement to it, though it enters into no detail, rather confirms than contradicts my account of the origin of the name bas-bleu.

This production is only a *jeu d'esprit*, a pleasantry of the moment; but its writer, even then, had breathed some strains of Zion; and in her poem on Sensibility had given rules for the government of the temper and the tongue, which, if acted upon, would prove not only a benefit but a blessing to social intercourse.

ADVERTISEMENT.

"The following trifle owes its birth and name to the mistake of a foreigner of distinction, who gave the literal appellation of the Bas-bleu to a small party of friends, who had been sometimes called, by way of pleastantry, the Blue-stockings."

THE BAS-BLEU.

"Vesey! of verse the judge and friend
Awhile my idle strain attend:
Not with the days of early Greece,
I mean to ope my slender piece;
The rare Symposium to proclaim,

Which crown'd th' Athenians' social name ;
Or how Aspasia's parties shone,
The first bas-bleu at Athens known.
Nor need I stop my tale to show,
At least to readers such as you,
How all that Rome esteem'd polite,
Supp'd with Lucullus every night."

"Long was society o'er-run
By Whist, that desolating Hun ;
Long did Quadrille despotic sit,
That Vandal of colloquial wit ;
And conversation's setting light
Lay half-obscur'd in Gothic night ;
Till Leo's triple crown to you,
Boscawen sage, bright Montague,
Divided, fell ;—your cares in haste
Rescued the ravag'd realms of taste ;
And Lyttleton's accomplished name,
And witty Pulteney shar'd the fame ;
The men, not bound by pedant rules,
Nor ladies *précieuses ridicules* ;
For polish'd Walpole show'd the way,
How wits may be both learn'd and gay ;
And Carter taught the female train,
The deeply wise are never vain."

"We pass the pleasures vast and various
Of routs, not social, but gregarious ;
And, pleas'd to gentler scenes retreat,
Where conversation holds her seat.
Small were that art which would insure
The circle's boasted quadrature !
See Vesey's plastic genius make
A circle every figure take ;
Nay ; shapes and forms, which would defy
All science of geometry ;
Isosceles, and parallel,
Names, hard to speak, and hard to spell !
Th' enchantress wav'd her wand, and spoke !
Her potent wand the CIRCLE broke ;
The social spirits hover round,
And bless the liberated ground.
Ask you what charms this gift dispense ?
'Tis the strong spell of common sense.

Away fell ceremony flew,
And with her bore DETRACTION too."
"Here sober dutchesses are seen,
Chaste wits, and critics void of spleen;
Physicians, fraught with real science,
And whigs and tories in alliance;
Poets, fulfilling christian duties,
Just lawyers, reasonable beauties;
Bishops who preach, and peers who pay,
And countesses who seldom play;
Learn'd antiquaries, who, from college,
Reject the rust, and bring the knowledge;
And, hear it, age, believe it, youth,—
Polemics, only seeking truth;
And travellers of that rare tribe,
Who've seen the countries they describe;
Ladies who point, nor think me partial,
An epigram as well as Martial;
Yet, in all female worth succeed,
As well as those who cannot read."
"Hail, conversation, soothing power,
Sweet goddess of the social hour!
Not with more heart-felt warmth, at least,
Does Lelius bend, thy true High-priest;
Than I, the lowest of thy train,
These field-flowers bring to deck thy fane;
Rise, incense pure from fragrant tea,
Delicious incense, worthy thee!
Hail, conversation, heav'nly fair,
Thou bliss of life, and balm of care!
Call forth the long forgotten knowledge,
Of school, of travel, and of college!
For thee, best solace of his toil;
The sage consumes his midnight oil;
And keeps late vigils, to produce
Materials for thy future use.
If none behold, ah! wherefore fair?
Ah! wherefore wise, if none must hear?
Our intellectual ore must shine,
Not slumber, idly, in the mine.
Let education's moral mint
The noblest images imprint;
Let taste her curious touchstone hold,

To try if standard be the gold;
But 'tis thy commerce, conversation,
Must give it use by circulation;
That noblest commerce of mankind,
Whose precious merchandize is mind!"*

By the foregoing facts it appears indisputable, that formerly, men as well as women were known by the name of blue-stockings, that the appellation was given to all who frequented the blue-stocking party, and that this party was formed of certain individuals who met for the purpose of rational conversation. Therefore it may be fairly assumed, that men and women who meet in these days for the same purpose are equally entitled to the name of blue-stockings, and they alone; though the epithet *blue* is now exclusively, and therefore erroneously, confined to some individuals amongst women. We also know that in former days, the term designated some of the most distinguished and enlightened men and women of the time; but of what description of persons are the females of the present day who are called the blue-stockings? Like their predecessors they are women who improve their minds, by the acquisition of useful knowledge, as well as, or instead of, showy accomplishments, and who are willing, when occasion serves, to join in discussing useful subjects, modestly desirous to bring their minds into collision with those of the wiser sex, that they may profit by their re-

* I *believe* that the writer of the above is now the only surviver of the original blue-stockings; but the dowager Countess of C—— and O——, who is still living, was one of the occasional visiters. This lady still retains the love of conversation-parties which she then imbibed, and has always had power to assemble at her house the first-rates of the present day, for the same purpose as led those of past days to the houses of the ladies mentioned above.

Dr. Johnson was dead before this regular blue-stocking party was formed; but Lady C—— used to see him at the house of her mother, the Viscountess Galway, and at Lady Lucan's; and one day, when the latter was flattering him, he said, "Madam, you are not only sweet, but *luscious*."

marks, on what has engaged their own attention; and by this means improve even the hours which are appropriated to social intercourse. Surely, no rational woman ought to be averse to resemble the original of such a portrait as this. Yet I have heard women who in acquirements are what I have described, and I may add abundantly learned at the same time in every household and domestic duty, exclaim, with eagerness and alarm, "Oh! indeed I am not a *blue*, I cannot bear *blues*."

They must, however, have been conscious of having studied the learned languages, chemistry, anatomy, and other things, with laudable perseverance! and if this be not blue-stockingism, there is no such thing in existence! mischievous disingenuousness! for it not only seems to throw a stigma on cultivation of the mind in their own sex, but it has moreover a tendency to deprive many individuals of the other, of the necessary stimulus to cultivate theirs; for if they were fully aware how much, and how well, the women of the present day are educated, some men would feel a salutary fear of being excelled in necessary knowledge, and, finding it impossible to keep down the evident intellectual improvement of women, they would see the necessity of improving themselves, in order to retain their own proper superiority. But never yet were disingenuousness and concealment fraught with aught but mischief; clandestine any thing is bad, even clandestine knowledge. A gratuitous display of learning and literature is offensive even in men, and much more so in women; but to deny the possession of them is in a moral sense far worse, as it involves the guilt of little lying and trumpery deception.

But perhaps the objects of my censure might reply, that the term *blue*, in the present day, means something so disagreeable, so disliked by women, and so sneered at by men, that it is impossible to have moral courage enough to incur the obloquy of being a *blue*. What the French call a *précieuse*,

and the English a pedant, is in these days, I suspect, called a *blue;* therefore, a *blue*, eroneously so named, is a woman that uses long words uttered in a conceited manner; who talks of Greek quantities and Latin derivations, if she happens to be a scholar; who volunteers her little or great knowledge in company at all times; who is more eager to talk than to listen; and is, in short, a *woman of display.*

I consider a blue as a very different character; and I must add, that I think it incumbent on all those women who are really blue-stockings, to dare to be *themselves*, and to show by joining seasonably and modestly in intellectual converse, that all females of cultivated minds are not pedants or *précieuses*, and that they love information for its own sake, and not for the sake of display.

It is undeniable, that if women cultivate their minds merely to show off in company, such knowledge must injure instead of benefiting its possessor, and it confirms the opinion of the poet,

"That a little learning is a dangerous thing;"

and as the shallow brook makes the most noise, it proves not only that their learning is not deep, but that their intellect and judgment are shallow also. But as we are not to argue against the use of any thing, because it is liable to *abuse*, it would be very unwise to say that women should not be well-informed, because learning may make some women pedantic. But I have more respect for *women of display*, than for women of real acquirements, who, from the terror of being called Blues, deny their right to be deemed so. Truth and ingenuousness are the best of all charms—charms which no blue-stockingism can give, and it ought not to be allowed to take them away. A thing is either right or wrong; if wrong, it is to be avoided; if right, we are to do it, regardless of consequences. If it be proper for women to have full rather than empty

minds, they should have moral courage enough to bear the ridicule attending it. They should not reremble the footman, who told his master he did not mind lying for his service, but that it hurt his conscience to be *found out.*

Besides, by writhing under the name of Blue, they keep up in its full force the detracting spirit, which has a pleasure in thus annoying them. If, on the contrary, they reply, "I am a blue-stocking, if to love knowledge better than ignorance entitles me to the name," the petty assaulter, be it man or woman, will soon lay down the weapon that is powerless to wound.

To call the seriously religious, saints, and the well-informed amongst women, Blues, are amongst the most intentionally offensive and malicious assaults of the utterers of detraction; and to reply with meekness, pleased rather than affronted, when the name is bestowed either on one's self, or one's friends, is the only way in which this unworthy spite can be successfully disarmed, and superiority in mind and advancement towards Christian perfection be most powerfully evinced.

I have endeavored to show in the foregoing observations, that blue-stockings, according to my sense of the term, suffer full as much from the cowardice and disingenuousness of each other, as from the prejudices of men, with regard to female acquirements.

But now that knowledge of all kinds, and in all ranks, is becoming daily more general; now that "the schoolmaster is in the field," and that "the march of intellect" is increasing in its rapidity, the subjects of my complaints will necessarily be removed. Men will grow more liberal as they become more enlightened; sure of their own increasing knowledge, they will not be afraid of finding rivals in the other sex; they will even learn to believe, that it is not necessary for women to be ignorant, in order to make them continue good wives and mothers, but admit that some knowledge

of languages, literature and science, may enable them to be of great service in the education of their children; and though I, probably, shall never live to see it, the time may arrive, when women may not only become pleased to be denominated blue-stockings, but the exclusiveness of the term itself will be lost in the universality of female claims to the possession of mental cultivation; and then, I humbly trust, that as it is from emptiness of mind in both sexes that gossip and tittle-tattle become the usual resources when they meet together in social intercourse, fulness of mind, by making a power of intellectual conversation common to all, will have, as I before observed, the beneficial result of weakening, if not of entirely *removing*, the practice of detraction.

There is another class in society peculiarly liable to the assaults of the detractor. I mean that most useful and necessary body, MEDICAL MEN. To detract from the professional knowledge of a physician and the skill of a surgeon, to declare in company that they are incompetent to fulfil the duties which they have taken upon themselves, is detraction of the most mischievous nature, as it may deprive them of the means of gaining a livelihood; such ruinous assertions, therefore, should never be made, unless persons so spoken of have been *proved* fatally deficient in medical and surgical ability.

It is not on this person's suspicion, or that person's assertion, that we are to be guided in judging of medical men, because the individuals so speaking are, probably, incompetent to form an opinion on the subject.

Women, as they are more particularly called upon to watch over the bed of sickness, and perform the nurse's part, should be especially on their guard on these occasions, lest they fall into detraction, and be indiscreet in their censure of the medical attendant. But women are too apt to feel, in the surgeon or physician, a confidence without

bounds, or a distrust equally unrestrained; however, with the first I am not disposed to quarrel; with the latter I am, as I am convinced that the former may often do good, and the latter must be the means of positive harm. I am convinced that if the patient and the patient's friends have no confidence in his skill, the medical man must become timid himself; he knows how much the success of medical treatment depends on the disposition of the patient's mind at the time, and that a remedy which is not *confided in* is not likely to succeed.

Every one has a right to call in fresh advice, when there is no amendment in the state of the patient; but the medical character of the unsuccessful prescriber should not be *talked away*, and his want of success unmercifully attributed to want of medical skill. Who can know whether that recovery, which may crown the effort of the successor, has not been the slow yet sure result of the previous medicines, and that the success of the new treatment may not have been owing to them? Yet, with what uncharitable haste are medical attendants judged! and in judging them, a degree of self-conceit is exhibited, not visible on other occasions. We never hear the truth of a lawyer's opinion canvassed and doubted in general society. And wherefore? because both men and women *know* that they are ignorant of law, and the most conceited do not venture to tell a solicitor how he is to word his legal document, but wisely conclude that he knows what he has expended, much money and time in learning.

But how differently does every one act by medical men! even women think themselves authorized sometimes to oppose the will of the professional attendant, and seem to believe that medical knowledge, unlike all other, is the spontaneous acquisition of the will, and that the desire to possess it and the possession are the same thing. I never am so disagreeable in my own eyes, as when I have presumed to prescribe, and never am so conscious of

the presumption of ignorance, as when I see men, but more often women, interfering in the sick chamber, regardless of the awful responsibility which they are incurring, and endangering, by their self-confidence, the life of one who is, perhaps, the hope and joy of their heart. And if the belief in their superior judgment can lead the comparatively ignorant of both sexes to interfere with the prescriptions of the physician or the surgeon, it is no wonder that professional ability should be so frequently the subject of detraction. Sometimes it may be carried so far as to incur a harsher name. If I assert that such a physician, or such a surgeon, is not skilful in his profession, I should be lessening him generally in his medical reputation; but if I were to say that he had killed, or was killing, this or that individual, and that he would probably kill me, or my friend, if we were to employ him, then I should be guilty of defamation, and might be prosecuted for it; but as it is an understood agreement in society, that conversation should not be repeated to the prejudice of the speakers, such prosecutions are rarely heard of; and, in one point of view, it is well that this tacit compact is so strictly kept, else actions for defamation would be painfully frequent.

But, in another respect, it is *not* well. Fear of some kind is salutary, in keeping most individuals in order; and when the best of all fears, that of judgment to come, is not sufficient to keep even believers in proper bounds, fear of the law might check the utterance of defaming words, when better motives would not; and one or two successful prosecutions for taking away professional reputation, would prove a restraint upon this unwarrantable evil-speaking.

I have always beheld the medical profession with great respect, not only for the sake of one who is no more, and those near and dear to me, who yet survive to adorn it, nor for the sake of many of its professors to whom I am personally attached, and by whom I have been greatly obliged; but for the

sake of the profession itself: and as I think its members are not treated with due distinction in society, I am always pleased when they are elevated by the favor of the sovereign into a certain degree of rank, and thus raised into more than equality with many, who, while they profit by their skill, and pay it as they ought, still treat the medical attendant with a sort of supercilious graciousness, as if far below themselves in the grades of society.

Yet, if the medical man has received a complete education, he has had advantages in life, which are rarely given to the sons of opulent tradesmen. The physician, more especially, if his sectarian principles do not forbid, becomes a student at the university, and takes his degree there, and, if his friends have interest, he is sent abroad under circumstances advantageous to his future prospects. But without the exclusive privileges bestowed by an English university, the medical student has still great advantages; foreign universities, as well as that of Edinburgh, are open to him; and if the student be true to himself, and profits as he ought by his opportunities of virtuous knowledge, he returns to his native country, and takes up his abode there, not only as the accomplished practitioner, but the well-educated gentleman; and for what has he thus travelled, read, and toiled? Not to pass the rest of his days in learned indolence, but to engage in the duties of a most painfully laborious profession; to have his time no longer his own, but subject to the often unwelcome requirings of the poor as well as the rich; he is liable to be forced to forego the pleasures of the social evening, to leave his bed at all times, and pass the night in anxious attendance by the bed of the sufferer, and he often performs these trying duties for a pecuniary recompense, very inadequate to his services; not from an unwillingness in the person benefited to bestow a sufficient reward, but simply from inability: for the physician and the surgeon cannot choose the objects of their exertions; they are, in that respect,

like the *Frères de la charite;* they have taken upon them the duties of their order, and they must obey the summons to be useful, whether the prince or the peasant be the subject of their benevolent calling. But in a consciousness of that usefulness they have a great reward; and where is the general usefulness to be compared with that of the medical man? If it be possible for excessive temperance, united to a good constitution, to make the aid of the physician in time almost unnecessary, it is impossible that casualties and accidents should not continue to happen, requiring the aid and hand of the surgeon and the oculist, and should the land we live in be torn with internal convulsions; should the now haughty rich become the humble poor; still, even amidst the wreck of commerce, and all other professions, the *surgical* profession at least must survive and flourish.

But it is not on account of this selfish security that justly feeling practitioners may love and honor their profession, but for the sake of its dearer privileges; for what privilege, save that of enlightening the darkened souls of our fellow-creatures, can equal the power of healing sickness, of alleviating pain, of calming the agonies of anxious tenderness, and being received even by the depressed with the smile of welcome? And should the men to whom these blessed privileges belong be treated with ought but respect, or received with supercilious coldness? I have enjoyed the affectionate pleasure, and respectful attention, with which the medical attendant is received in some families, and thought it spoke much in favor of both parties. But I do not like to see them received like their own medicines; like something nauseous but necessary, and to be gone without as long as possible. Nay, I believe that it is politic in all persons to cultivate a benevolent feeling towards their medical attendants. The sight of a welcome countenance does us good when we are in health; and if the attendant be considered as a friend as

well as physician, his prescriptions will be more likely to have a good effect; the state of the mind and temper have a great deal to do with that of our health, and the medical man, the sight of whom excites the most kind sensations in his patients, will, I am confident, be most likely to cure them.

Yet, one thing more before I conclude these remarks, which it has been no little effort to me to hazard.

I have ventured to censure those who allow themselves unguardedly to detract from the reputation of medical men; and now venture to observe, how weak, how dangerous, it is for medical men to detract from the ability of each other. Surely they ought to make common cause against the common enemy, but I may add with truth, that amongst the most respectable and distinguished of the profession, this necessary forbearance is scrupulously observed, and they may be the subjects, but are not the utterers of this very reprehensible detraction.

There is another class of persons particularly exposed to be the subjects of detraction; namely, CONVERTS to what is called SERIOUS RELIGION;—but, more especially, those who have left the pleasures of the world, after a long and well-known participation of them, and who, some of them in the prime of life, some in its middle stage, and some in its decline, have separated themselves from general intercourse to walk in the more narrow way of Christian duties.

It is possible, that those who have all their lives been secluded from the gay world, not only from inclination but because they were educated out of it, may escape the tongue of detraction if they act consistently with their religious profession. But not so those laborers in the vineyard, who have been called into it only at the eleventh hour. In the reality of the call, none of the votaries of the world believe. To interested motives, and probably of a degrading nature, the renunciation of the scenes of their former pleasures is attributed, and

the appellations of hypocrite and dissembler are lavished upon them, unless they are gently but more contemptuously still dismissed with the name of fanatic, enthusiast, and maniac. But though, in judging of what is called conversion, more ignorance of the human heart, especially of the heart under the influence of spiritual motives, is usually displayed than on any other subjects, and ignorance evinced by detractors, not only of their victim's creed, but often of the foundation of their own; I think this sort of detraction more excusable than any other; because in the first place, it is difficult to believe, that what we ourselves delight in, is not equally delightful to others, and those who are every day enjoying the pleasures of public places, of the ball, of the concert, or of the card party, find it almost impossible to admit, that life can be even bearable without this succession of excitements; still less can they believe, that those who have once enjoyed, can have been induced to resign them, from any consideration of a pure and spiritual nature; "because (they say) the delights of this world are *positive* and *tangible*, and were, doubtless, given to us by a bountiful Creator to be enjoyed; therefore, it is time enough to think of another world, and preparations for it, when age and its infirmities have incapacitated us from profiting by them." But how should they understand what they have never experienced? the superior pleasures which pursuits of a higher order bestow. Besides, they well know they have the multitude with them, and they would therefore, think it not only weak but presumptuous to go counter to the world at large, and set themselves up as wiser and holier than others are. Time was when I was contented so to reason myself; but, whether from my own experience or not is immaterial, I suspect that these reasons are not the only ones for the severity and injustice with which persons of the world judge those who have, in a great measure, seceded from it. I think detractors, on this occasion, are (uncon-

sciously, perhaps,) irritated into unkind doubts and splenetic remarks, by this consideration: "If these enthusiasts are *right*, how *very wrong are we!*" If it be a duty incumbent on Christians to improve instead of wasting the time, and to be strangers in the general haunts of dissipation; and if, as may be possible, these seceders from our circles are really impelled by honest, pious motives, they have, in reality, a great advantage over us; and if what the apostle James says be true, namely, that "pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world," then in that first of all competitions—competition for the favor of the Most High—they are, indeed, more likely to succeed than we are; and instead of being the objects of our calumny, or our contemptuous pity, they might well be the objects of our envy. And, doubtless, a sort of unconscious envy, a jealous indignation, is at the bottom of the detraction of which I am now treating; and, as the competition is of the most awful and important kind, one should be more inclined to view, with Christian forbearance and compassion, the detraction amounting to slander, which the advanced competitor in the Christian race provokes from those who, though they desire the *crown*, cannot enter the lists to obtain it.

But there is another sort of detractors, who are equally inclined to assault those who have entered on a religious course of life; I mean, that unhappy class of beings who, having tried to convince themselves that this life is all, regard with the bitterest contempt self-denying Christians, and not only distrust their sincerity, but despise their understanding. It is my conviction that persons, even of this class, are operated upon and impelled to this detraction, by an undefined consciousness or fear, that the idea of another world, and of consequent responsibility in this, are not "cunningly devised fables" of man's invention, and that, therefore,

those followers of the cross who dare to profess Christ before men, and endeavor to do his will according to their sense of his requirings, are more worthy of congratulation than revilings; consequently, feeling that consistent Christians are the most *enviable* of their fellow-creatures, they *hate* and *calumniate* them the most. But consistent and really converted Christians can be inclined to return only good for evil to those who thus pelt them, as it were, with stones, as they go on their road to Zion.

They must remember the spirit and the works of their blessed Lord, when speaking of his persecutors—"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!" and that spirit will enable them to return conscious contumely with prayer for the conversion of its utterer, and to endeavor to adorn their Christian profession with such meekness, such forbearance, such "gentle offices of patient love," and so "to add to their faith charity," proving also their faith so evidently by their works, that even the scoffer—nay, the infidel, may be led to exclaim in the language of King Agrippa, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!"

Before I quit this subject, I must take notice of a common belief, that the professors of serious religion are gloomy and unsocial in their habits and manners, and that the path of religion is one of briers and thorns. In all religious sects, there will be some few, no doubt, who, naturally of a gloomy and morose temper, may clothe their piety in unattractive austerity, and because physically depressed, may seem morally and religiously so. But I have rarely known any deep-rooted religious conviction attended with aught but unaffected comfort; and were I to select an example of the most perfect happiness and of the most unvarying cheerfulness, I should seek and find it in a religious family; I should begin my picture with the assembling of the household in the morning for religious instruction and religious purposes. I should follow its mem-

bers through the active Christian duties to the social meal, the evening circle, the amusing, instructive reading, by one or more persons present, the needle meanwhile plying its busy task for the purposes of charity or well motived economy, and these rational employments succeeded by a second assembling of the household for religious duties, and all retiring to their respective rooms, full of thankfulness for the deeds of love they may have been enabled to perform in the day, for the innocent and rational enjoyments of the social circle, and for the humble hope, the result of confiding faith, which cheers them on their pillow, that they shall abide under "the shadow of the Almighty" through the darkness of the night, and be permitted to see the light of another day, to resume the same occupations, pleasures, and happiness. Instead of gloom, ennui, and listlessness, a day so passed seems only too quickly gone, and unlike those days which are passed in the feverish excitement of dissipated pleasure, which are always followed by the lassitude of exhaustion, accompanied often by a sense of mortified vanity, unsuccessful competition, and disappointed feelings, its labors no doubt brought a blessing on them for their endeavors to bless, and the evening's enjoyments consisted of exertions which enliven without exhausting, and excite without producing consequent depression.

There are some other prominent objects, peculiary exposed to detraction, which I must briefly mention; namely, FATHERS AND MOTHERS IN LAW, BROTHERS' WIVES, AND SISTERS' HUSBANDS.

Family ties are often snares; the greatest blessings in life have their attendant evils; weeds spring up by flowers. "Every rose has its thorn," says the proverb, and when did proverbs speak falsely? Compared with the full pages of moralists, they are as drops to gallons, but they are rare and precious drops, like those of attar roses. Pope, in his epistle to Addison, on his dialogue on medals, says that ambition

——"found it vain to trust
The faithless column, and the mouldering bust,
Convinc'd she now contracts her vast design,
And all her triumphs shrinks into a coin."

So wisdom, like ambition, as if unwilling to trust her choicest stores to voluminous writers, has consigned her most valuable dictums to the narrow compass of a proverb: and I follow up this eulogy by the well-known proverb of "standers-by see most of the game;" applying it to myself, thus: I am a tieless solitary individual; some ties I never possessed, and those which I had, are broken and gone; therefore, as I am a lone, widowed, childless, orphaned, being, I am only "a stander-by" at the game of the affections, at which happiness is the stake; consequently, as I must be an unprejudiced and uninterested judge of the ways in which it is *played*, and sometimes *lost*, it may not be impertinent for me to make known the results of my experience. And experience has convinced me, that it is almost impossible for those who take on themselves the responsible character of fathers and mothers in law, to escape the dangers attendant on it; and chiefly, because they arise from the best and tenderest feelings of the relatives of the former connexion. It is not in nature, nor ought it to be, for these to regard the new ties without watchful observation, mingled with jealous distrust; and as bad feelings are never so ensnaring as when they steal on us in the shape of amiable ones, fathers and mothers in law are often commented upon with unjust severity. And though they require every allowance to be made for them on account of the difficulty of their situation, they are too often judged with the pertinacity of jealous feeling, rather than with the candor of dispassionate discrimination; and the peace of the living is sometimes sacrificed to the imagined injuries of the rights of the dead. No doubt it sometimes happens, that the claims of the dead are forgotten in those of the living, but I

would urge on the judges on these occasions, the necessity of being on their guard against the deceitfulness of their own hearts, lest they fall into the snare of requiring too much for the sake of those whom they have loved and lost. Let them remember that their desires, however unreasonable they may be, are hallowed in their eyes by the force of faithful affection; and even their selfishness, in such a cause, assumes the garb of a virtue.

I have often listened with pain to charges against fathers and mothers in law, and wished the accusers could put themselves in the place of the accused, believing that, could they feel the difficulty of the situation, they would be forced to excuse, where they were usually eager to condemn; and would acknowledge that they had often been led into unreasonable expectations, by the influence of painful competition, the result of which was as usual unjust and ungenerous detraction.

Brothers' wives are often sufferers from much less excusable feelings in their judges; for they are commonly those of personal jealousy and rivalship. Till brothers marry, their sisters are the first objects in their affections, especially if their parents are dead; therefore, the marriage of a brother cannot be a pleasant circumstance to unmarried sisters, and the object of his choice is consequently exposed to very severe criticism; besides, it is most probable that the brother is considered as a paragon of perfection, and nothing of mortal mould can be deemed worthy of him.

Self-love, therefore, as well as tenacious affection, exposes the poor wife to unindulgent and prejudiced scrutiny, and its results, unjust detraction. Brothers are sometimes as jealous of sisters' husbands, as sisters are of brothers' wives, but not so frequently; because men have the power of marrying when they choose, and having lost one object of love, can soon seek and obtain another. But this is not the case with sisters if unmarried; they may not have an opportunity of replacing the beloved

object by one dearer still, and therefore the *pronoun possessive* is at liberty to employ all its influence against their peace; whispering, like the serpent at the ear of Eve, "this new sister has deprived us of our influence, and of the affections once exclusively ours; that, however, would not signify if she were *worthy* of our brother; (or brothers,) but to resign such a treasure to one so inferior! oh! it is intolerable!"

Sisters' husbands are, like *sisters' lovers*, the frequent objects of detraction; and they also have a strong tendency, from the influence of the *pronoun possessive*, to exalt their sisters' qualities, and depreciate those of their brothers in law, and, formidable proof of the power of family conceit! it is not always that even the conviction of their sister's happiness can subdue their belief of her imagined superiority to her husband, and put a stop to the utterance of unkind detraction. Yet, surely these feelings ought to be struggled with, and conquered; and the prevailing wish, when brothers and sisters are added to a family, should be, to receive them with affectionate good will, with a desire to bring their merits forward, and to be kind to their virtues; to consider them as objects to be held sacred from ridicule, because they are become the depositaries of the happiness of those whom they tenderly love; they should be welcomed as real friends, not scrutinized as probable enemies; and never allowed to be, as they too frequently are, the favorite theme of detraction.

Such uncandid judges should remember that they incur the risk of losing entirely the affections which they so highly prize.

The wife of the brother, and the husband of the sister, must be more beloved than they are; and if either of them are conscious of being unjustly depreciated, they may impart their sense of injury to those who love them best; and the consequence will probably be, that they will become alienated from those who view with prejudice and dislike, the

objects of their unqualified admiration. This, therefore, is one of the instances in which it would be *policy* as well as *duty* to *abstain from detraction.*

I say in recapitulation here,

That having enumerated the different classes of detractors and of detractions, I mention some of those who are particularly the objects of detracting conversation.

That the authoress must prepare to be hated, caviled at, and depreciated; to be judged without being read through; and submit to be misquoted and misrepresented.

That even if a woman publishes anonymously, she must not expect to escape the disadvantages of authorship;—that she will appear even to the nearest and dearest few, in a new and unpleasing light.

That the abstract idea of a female writer in former days was a dirty, ill-dressed, ragged, snuffy-nosed woman, who could not perform the most common and necessary duties of her sex.

That even in the metropolis, the paradise of authoresses, as the name is a passport into the first circles, the highest praise probably that can be given to a female writer is, "she is really agreeable, and I could not have suspected her of being an authoress."

That it is better for authors and authoresses who wish to benefit others by their works, not to live in the busy haunts of men. That the assumption of the power to teach can only be forgiven and admitted, if the teacher lives in retirement—that the Oracles of Delphos would not have been believed in and acted upon at Rome, had they been delivered at a neighboring Tripod, and from a native priestess; and that "familiarity breeds contempt," is a proverb founded on the experience of ages.

That according to the origin of the Blue-stocking club, which I give in these pages, the men and women who belonged to it were both called Blue-stockings.

That women at that period did not as now, shrink

from the title of Blue-stocking. That the women of the present day should rather confess that they are blues, than eagerly deny it, as a blue-stocking means one who employs and improves her time, and that if she owned her right to the title, the petty assaulter, be he man or woman, would drop the weapon as soon as he saw that it had not power to wound.

That to detract from the skill of MEDICAL MEN, and make their supposed incompetence the theme of our conversation is a most unwarrantable sort of detraction, and may be destruction to their prospects in life. That the persons so speaking are often not competent to form a judgment on the subjects on which they are so eager to decide.

That we never call the truth of a lawyer's opinion into question, and doubt and canvass it in society.

That many not contented with interfering with the prescriptions of the surgeon or physician, accuse them of killing this or that person, and say that to call them in would be inviting death.

That such language is defamation, and might be prosecuted, but that there is a tacit agreement in what is called *good society*, that such conversations are confidential, and are not to be repeated to the injury of the utterer of them.

That I have always beheld the medical profession with great respect, not only for the sake of near and dear relatives, but for its own. That, thinking its members are not treated with due distinction in society, I am always pleased when they are elevated by the favor of the sovereign, into a certain degree of rank, and thus lifted into more than equality with many who treat the medical attendant with a sort of supercilious graciousness, as if far below themselves in the grades of society.

That, in truth, if the medical man has received a complete education, he has had advantages in life rarely given to the sons of opulent tradesmen.

That no privilege, save that of enlightening the

darkened souls of our fellow-creatures, can equal that of healing sickness, alleviating pain, and of being received, even by the depressed, with a smile of welcome.

That it is politic in all persons to cultivate a benevolent feeling towards their medical attendant.

That it is weak and dangerous in medical men to detract from the abilities of each other; that they should make common cause against the common enemy; and that the most respectable men in the profession set an example of this forbearance.

That those who have made a religious profession are particularly exposed to detraction, whether they have left the pleasures of the world in the prime of their days, in middle life, or in its decline.

That the reality of their call is doubted, and motives attributed to them of a vile, degrading nature, and they are called cants and hypocrites, or fanatics, enthusiasts, or maniacs.

That in judging of CONVERSION, more ignorance of the human heart is exhibited than in any thing else; but, that this detraction is the most excusable of any.

That it is excusable because it is difficult to believe, that what we ourselves delight in can ever cease to delight others.

That I suspect that detractors on these occasions are irritated into splenetic doubts and remarks, by this consideration, "If these enthusiasts are right, how wrong, how very wrong, must we be!"

That there is another set of men who are equally disposed to attack those who have entered on a religious course of life; I mean those who have tried to convince themselves that this life is all, and who either distrust these self-denying Christians' sincerity, or despise their understandings.

That I believe this class of beings are impelled by a feeling of secret envy, as they cannot be quite sure that another world is one of "the cunningly devised fables;" therefore they feel that the followers of the cross of Christ will have a great advan-

tage over them, if their creed be right, and that consequently, the consistent Christian is of all beings the most to be envied, and therefore to be hated and calumniated the most.

That it is a great error to believe that professors of serious religion are gloomy. That, on the contrary, the most perfect cheerfulness, evenness of spirit, and uninterrupted happiness, is to be found in the Christian family, such as I have tried to describe.

That fathers and mothers in law, brothers' wives and sisters' husbands, are also prominent objects for detraction; that the detractors from the first of these should be particularly on their guard against the deceitfulness of their own hearts, because their detraction springs probably from good and amiable motives; and lastly, that the latter are under the dominion of feelings which are less excusable, and which policy as well as principle should lead them to struggle with and subdue.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON DEFAMATION.

I MUST now discuss the most painful part of my subject; namely, that excess of detraction which becomes DEFAMATION. Defamation is always detraction; but though the tongue, which is ready to detract, is well fitted to defame, still, detraction is not positively defamation.

It was against the utterers of detraction amounting to defamation, that the punishment of standing in a white sheet in the aisle or porch of a church, was awarded by the justice of our ancestors; and when I first entered into society, and heard reputations gossiped away, I used to consider the abolition of this punishment as a national evil; nay, I have sometimes amused myself with imagining certain of our acquaintances standing in the aisle of their parish church, in this well-deserved attire! and had I possessed the power of grouping with my pencil, many persons might have seen their faces peeping from under its degrading folds, who would have been unconscious that they deserved to figure there, though, for the slanderous frequenters of an *ale-house*, or inhabitants of a *cottage*, they would have judged it a proper punishment. But as sinners in robes were always more offensive to me than sinners in rags, and the slanderer of the drawing-room than that of the kitchen, (as ignorance may excuse the one but cannot the other) I wrapt the white sheet in idea round the rich alone, and should have rejoiced to see my imaginations realized. But, as I have increased in years, I have learnt to make more allowance for the infirmities of others, taught and humbled by a growing sense of

my own; and the white sheet, or, indeed, any punishments for offences which are common to us all as erring mortals, I have ceased to feel any desire to see inflicted, even, as I humbly trust, on those who have calumniated myself. Still, I have not ceased to feel a strong emotion of indignation whenever I hear defamation uttered against friend or foe; and alas! there are few persons who have lived in the world, whether in public or in private life, without hearing their acquaintances, male or female, accused of faults which, if proved, would have driven them from society. I have frequently heard accusations uttered, which made accusers responsible to the power of the law, and uttered too with a degree of self-complacency, for the ingenious malice with which the charge was worded, not only painful but appalling to witness. Which of my readers, as well as myself, has not heard a lawyer accused of taking a bribe to lose a cause for his client! or a physician or surgeon accused of killing his patients, either by his system, his rashness, or his ignorance? Which of us has not heard some persons accused of suppressing or forging a will? Who has not listened to the aspersions of the fair fame of woman, for which the utmost vengeance of the law could not have afforded the slightest recompense? and this, too, in what is called good company!

Far be it from me to plead for those of my own sex, who, regardless of decorum, have been contented to be innocent, without being careful to appear so; who have carried liveliness to the borders of levity, and worn the semblance of errors, which they, in their inmost heart, abhorred; such mistaken women must be content to take the consequences of their own actions, and, though their indiscretion does not at all excuse the slander and backbiting of their accusers, still they must bend in humble resignation to the punishment of which they are conscious. But I have known instances

where the most correct conduct has not preserved from defamation.

I know, that there have been men and women too, who though supported by the consciousness of innocence, have yet pined, broken-hearted through life, bowed by a sense of degradation which they never deserved; and have sunk into an early grave, from the consequences of calumnies, spoken originally, perhaps, in the orgies of bacchanalian revelry, and repeated as much in wantonness as malignity at the tea-table of the gossip. Alas! these unfortunates might have exclaimed with the frogs in the fable, when some wanton boys threw stones into their pond, "It may be sport to you, but it is death to us."

Nay, I believe that there are individuals tremblingly alive to the opinions of others, who are preserved from misery, and prevented from hiding themselves in obscurity, merely by being allowed to remain unconscious to what vile motives even their best actions are attributed. For as the somnambulist can walk in safety in the midst of peril, only while his sleep is permitted to continue, so these objects of unmerited obloquy are preserved in peace only as long as they are ignorant of their wrongs, but inform the calumniated, and awaken the sleep-walker, and wretchedness even for life would probably be the fate of the one, and dislocated joints or death, of the other.

My own sex must bear with me, while I say that though every man is debased in my eyes when I hear him accuse a woman of any gross offence, and though I consider his attack on defenceless females as mean and unmanly; yet, I am still more wounded when I hear the tongue of woman busy with the fame of woman, and when the scandalous story is propagated by a *female* slanderer. Men would not dare to slander one female in the presence of another, if we were true to ourselves; if, instead of seeming to enjoy the odious tale, we were to declare ourselves degraded at being sup-

posed capable of relishing it, and were to throw the shield of our candor and disbelief over the unconscious and probably innocent victim.

No one has a right to believe that any man or woman deserves to be exiled from respectable society, unless the proofs of guilt are too strong to be denied; therefore, the propagators of unproved charges, ought to be deemed as infamous in one way, as those whom they accuse can be in another; and they are particularly unbecoming the soft voice of woman.

"What's female beauty but an air divine,
Through which the mind's all gentle graces shine?"

says Dr. Young in his "Universal Passion," and if this be true, the woman, be she ever so beautiful, who readily listens to a tale of scandal, and smiles on the propagators, forfeits that "air divine" of which the poet speaks, and loses her claim to those "gentle graces" which bestow a beauty that time can never destroy, the beauty of the candid mind and benevolent heart, illuminating the countenance, and giving charm to the conversation. The following extract from an American writer, from whose little work, "The Brief Examiner," I have derived amusement, and, I hope, profit, is well suited to this subject. "It would be passing no deception on a young girl at school, to tell her along with more solemn exhortations, that the feelings and dispositions from which spring calumny and backbiting would deform her face; for what is that beauty in the female face, which pleases all beholders? It consists chiefly in the aspect that indicates good affections. Every indication of candor, gentleness, and benignity, is a beauty; on the contrary, every feature or aspect of countenance that indicates pride, envy, or malignity, is a deformity. Nor does it need proof, that in frequent instances the face becomes at length the index of the pas-

sions which one habitually harbors, whether they be of the benevolent or the malignant kind. One remark more, and no trifling one. There scarcely can be a more attractive feature in the character of a woman, than her veiling, or treating with sisterly candor, those petty blemishes from which she is happily exempt herself."

When I began this work I had convinced myself that though detraction was a common vice, defamation was not; but the experience even of the last year has convinced me that wherever the spirit of the world exists, not only that of detraction but of defamation exists also, and that though I may not be as much exposed to hear its breathings as I once was, they are to be heard, and that where the detractor is, the defamer is not far behind. Even when, which is rarely the case, reports are not false, still it is our duty to suspend our belief of them, till to doubt is no longer possible. And if true, why should I undertake the unbecoming task of spreading the disgrace? If I have no personal ill-will towards the offender, what motive but a love of evil-speaking can induce me to do so? and if I have, it is the more necessary that I should be silent, lest I should be indulging a feeling of revenge. The author of the Government of the Tongue gives the epithet of lying to defamation; and *justly*, because those who are eager to tell a tale of scandal are ready to heighten its effects by the aid of invention, especially if the tale be against any one who has wounded their self-love; moreover, a charge, after being bruited about by several tongues, increases in guilt and importance so much, that the first utterer of it would scarcely know it again. How unsatisfactory often is the evidence for the truth of a calumnious report. "Who told thee this? and how dost thou know it is true?" "Oh! because such a one told me, and he had it from lady so and so, and she knows the parties intimately." Admirable authority! for if lady so and so knows the parties intimately, was she likely to

gossip away their character? and if she was treacherous enough to malign her intimate associates, I must have better evidence than that of so unprincipled a person, before I could believe the scandal uttered. Yet it is on such evidence as the foregoing, that one finds nine calumnies out of ten are founded and propagated.

I have given a specimen of the dialogue of talkers-over, and shown the progress of detraction, and though I shrink from the task, I shall venture to display in another dialogue the progress of defamation.*

We will suppose the parties first assembled to be the master and mistress of the house, their two daughters, a boy of thirteen—their son and myself, luncheon being almost concluded, and the elder girl is showing me some fine prints in the next room, but as the door is open I hear all that passes. "Hark! there is a knock, my dear! Ring the bell to have the luncheon taken away." "Make haste, sister!" cries one of the girls, lowering her voice, "for it is Mrs. Kappa, and we must have more luncheon for her if she sees it, for she has such an appetite;" "Dear me, mamma," cries the other girl, "she always contrives to come at our luncheon time, for she is so stingy, she does not allow herself any at home." "Indeed!" says the papa. "Yes, I believe it is true," cries the mamma. By this time, the bell has rung, the luncheon is removed, and the visiter enters just as the mother has expressed her joy that the table is cleared. "How are you, my dear Mrs. Kappa," says the mistress of the house, "glad to see you." "Pray sit down, my good friend," says her husband, our luncheon is only just gone." "I am sorry you did not come sooner," says the wife. "You are very good," re-

* Though ignorant of the Greek language, I have ventured to give the persons in my dialogues the names of the Greek alphabet, because I feared that if I put Mrs. or Mr L—— or D——, some persons might choose to fancy I meant some particular individuals.

plies Mrs. Kappa, "but I rarely eat luncheon." "But, perhaps, you will take something, a piece of cake, and a glass of wine." "Oh! no, thank you," she replies faintly, meaning to be pressed, but her no is suffered to pass for what it was not meant to be, a negative; and the parties sit down, all but the master of the house, who leans against the chimney-piece, with one hand in his waistcoat pocket, swinging himself backwards and forwards, and the elder daughter and myself, who are now turning over a portfolio on the table. "Well, Mrs. Kappa," says the master of the house, "is there any news stirring?" "Yes, a good deal, but then it may not be true." "No matter, what is it?" "They say young Zeta is gone off in debt, and has robbed his father to a considerable amount!" "That was to be expected from his bringing up." "Yes, certainly." In this opinion all join, and there is a chorus of "parents that spoil their children must take the consequences." At this moment a Major Mu is announced, and after the usual compliments, the Major says, "Well, have you heard the news?" "Yes," says the elder girl, "if you mean that young Zeta is gone off." "Oh! he is gone *quite* off, is he, and not taken?" replies the Major, "What do you mean?" "Why, they say he has committed a forgery." "Very likely, but are you sure of it?" "Oh! no, not sure; nay, I believe it was only said that some one had supposed it most *likely* he had committed forgery." "Oh, that is all; well, but what other news have you?" "The lovely Helen Omicron is going to be married to a man some years older than her father!" "Very likely!" observes Mrs. Kappa, "she had outstaid her market, and I dare say the gentleman is very rich." "Besides," says the father, "she has made herself so talked of, for our friend Sir William Rho, that she may think herself well off to get married at all." "With Sir William! I never heard of that before, I remember she was violently in love with a young ensign, and once, I believe, was just saved from

eloping with her singing master." "At last," cries the Major, "she is *provided* for, and will soon be safe from *elopements* I trust." "That is not so sure," says the father significantly, "but who is the gentleman?" "Sir Martin Tau, Baronet." "A Baronet too?" what luck! where did she meet him?" "Oh! at a watering place." "They have given her the chance of those places every season, you know," cries the Major, "for her best days were long ago over: she was talked of for me! (drawing up his neckcloth) and I had the run of their house, but it would not do—she was too old." "So it was at a watering place, was it?" says the mother. At which her friend Kappa, who was not pleased, probably, at missing her luncheon, and had great talents for stinging and flinging, besides some catlike* propensities; observed in a soft tone, "I think, my dear friend, you never take *your* daughters to *watering places*;" well knowing that they went to one *every year*, and the mother with a heightened color replies to the stinger, "Oh dear! yes I do, but all persons' daughters have not the same luck." Lady Lambda is now announced, who says, when we are all seated, "I suppose you have

* By cat-like, I mean having the cat's propensity to give a *coup de patte*, a sudden stroke of the paw, when the creature seems in perfect amity with one, and in harmless play. The nickname of cats is, I know, exclusively given to that much-injured body of women called "old maids," but I do not see the peculiar justice of the appellation as applied to them. On the contrary, according to my definition of the term cat, it applies to all young men and women married or single, as well as to the old of both sexes, who from a sort of treacherous impulse take pleasure in saying something wounding to one's feelings, and mortifying to one's self-love, whether it regards one's self or those in whom we are interested; and who, even in moments of unsuspecting good will, by the utterance of some sudden sarcasm at the commencement perhaps of a friendly intercourse, convert the social feeling into one of conscious injury, and occasion a wound which rankles in the bosom of the injured during the rest of the meeting. Oh! there are many cats in the world! and I have seen even youth and beauty become suddenly offensive to my sight, by the expression of malevolent pleasure at having given, cat-like a *coup de patte*, which had inflicted a wound on the sensitive nature of an unoffending companion.

heard that old Lady Pi is dying *at last*, and that as soon as decency permits, her husband will marry Miss Sigma." "Decency!" is the general exclamation! "If they had any regard to decency," says the mistress of the house, "the marriage could not have been talked of, but his fondness for that girl was notorious! how I have pitied poor Lady Pi!" "Oh!" cries the Major, "she had her *consolations?*" putting his hand to his mouth as if drinking.

"O! fye!" cries Lady Lambda, giving him a *reproving* pat, in which there was much *encouragement;* "this is scandal, and I hate scandal." "But is it not scandal," says one of the party, "to talk of this marriage at all?" "Perhaps so," replies Lady Lambda, "but they talk much *worse* scandal, I assure you." "Indeed," cries the eager Kappa, drawing her chair closer to Lady Lambda, "and they do say——" "What!" eagerly exclaim both the ladies. "That when Miss Sigma was staying at the house, Lady Pi missed a gown and some fine lace out of her wardrobe; and one of the servants was suspected of having stolen them. But one day, when Lady Pi was confined to her room, and Miss Sigma was to have the carriage to carry her to a party, Lady Pi, who had been carried to the window for *air*, saw Miss Sigma get into the carriage in the *very* gown which she missed, and, as she believed, her own lace on her collerette!" "Really! what impudence!" "But," observed one of the party, "Why should not this young lady have a gown *like* Lady Pi's." "Oh, but it was a very expensive flowered muslin gown, and Miss Sigma could not *afford* to buy such an one." "But Sir George Pi could afford to give," said the Major. "*True*," said the master of the house, "but Miss Sigma is, you know, a very *taking* woman." "Excellent! excellent!" "But you know," said the Major, emulous of his friend's punning fame, "if Sir George *takes* the lady, she will, after all, find herself MISTAKEN." "What, mistaken!" says one. "I don't exactly see that," cries another; while the mortified Major is

on the point of being forced to explain his vile quibble, when Lady Lambda exclaims, "Oh! I see it! excellent! excellent! Major, *Miss, taken.*" "But, Major," cried the master of the house, alarmed for his laurels, "Lady Pi herself, according to you, was a *taking* woman," and a chorus of laughs repays him. And now that, like the knife of the heathen priest, their detracting weapon is sharpened for the sacrifice of victims by *imagined wit*, they eagerly demand more news, more scandal, and the ready weapon descends on a new victim in the shape of Colonel Upsilon.

"Well but, Lady Lambda, you said you had more *news*," asked the mistress of the house, when this interruption was over. "O, yes, Colonel Upsilon has made his choice at last; he has given up the widow Theta, and is to have the widow Iota; it is said his poor wife, knowing he was courting *both*, advised this preference."

"I am quite sure," cries one of the party rather indignantly, "that his wife had no reason to be jealous, he was one of the most kind and attentive of husbands, and such a nurse."

"A very *attentive* nurse, indeed," says Lady Lambda. "Yes," says the lady of the house, with an emphasis. "Hush, hush, my dear," cries the husband. "No; I choose to speak out, my love; they do say that he chose to *prescribe* for his wife as well as nurse her, and medical men think she was not the *better* for his prescriptions."

Thus they began by a charge of robbery, an accusation of forgery, imputations of levity, in one young lady, and they imply against another a charge of flirting with a married man, and stealing his wife's clothes; and they end by charging a husband with prescribing wrong medicines for his wife! What a climax of defamation! yet, awful as it is, I have witnessed such an one frequently in the course of my experience, and have commonly been able to trace *some* of it to the results of *competition.*

On this occasion, I wish my readers to believe, that I quitted the company after this last speech, glad to make my escape, though I knew that I left my character behind me for a prey and a pastime.

And what a cold-blooded, heartless, and mean, as well as criminal, enjoyment was this defamation! What an unsafe and fearful amusement!

When accidents happen and lives are lost, whether on land or water, we feel our pity and regret increased if the killed or drowned met their fate on a party of pleasure; and whence does this proceed, but from the afflicting contrast between the glad expectation and the mournful reality, between the views of the unconscious parties and their miserable results? But, those who believe defamation to be a great crime, and that its utterers are liable to the wrath of an offended Deity, must listen to the conversation of defamers with pity of the same nature, but of a still greater degree of strength, for they must consider them as having met, like the victims on the land or water, for the *purposes of pleasure;* and as having incurred, by the calumnies in which they sought enjoyment, that *second* death, more terrible than the first—the death not of the *body* but the *soul.*

Defamation is, indeed, a crime so consciously lowering, that most persons are unwilling to own that they commit it; and though they call the slanders which they hear detestable, they distinguish those which they utter by the plausible name of the expression of *proper indignation* and *retributive justice.*

The speakers in a dialogue, like that which I have given, would each in turn exclaim, at the first opportunity, probably, against the detracting and defaming tongue of their recent associates. Few persons, if any, have courage enough, admitting that they have sufficient self-knowledge, to say to themselves, "I am a detractor, I am a defamer, I propagated an evil report against that man on such a day, because I was envious of him; and another

day I injured such a woman's reputation, by telling a slanderous story of her, because she had wounded my self-love." Yet, there are many persons in the world who might make the confession to themselves almost any day in the week. Once and only once I saw, as I believe, a person deeply impressed with the weight of the crime of defamation; and as if the burdened heart wished, but dared not, to throw off its load entirely by a complete confession. A gentleman called on my husband and myself one evening, with whom we had spent the preceding afternoon at the house of a mutual acquaintance. "Did you stay long after us?" said my husband. "Oh yes!" replied the other, "long indeed! I staid, sitting up with the man and his wife, till near two in the morning; for we did not know how time went!" "Then your conversation must have been very interesting." "Yes!" was the reply, in an odd tone and with a flushed cheek; "but it was dreadful also; there was not one of our acquaintances that we did not bring before our tribunal; and we did not show any mercy! Oh! it was too bad!" He then covered his face, adding, "and there was that fiend, the wife, pretending to be shocked at our severity, and calling us odious calumniators! but if our cruelty abated one moment, she would goad us on again by some diabolical remark; till, at last, we had gone so far in deadly defamation, that we felt almost ashamed to look each other in the face!" We were really shocked into silence, and were impressed, at the same moment, with the same conviction, namely, that we ourselves had been two of the victims offered up at the shrine of defamation, and that the speaker wished to satisfy his conscience by confessing it, but dared not do more than insinuate the degrading fact. I may add, that we rejoiced to be the objects, rather than the utterers of this unmerciful defamation.

I here observe in recapitulation,

That as I have advanced in years and experience, I have learnt to feel more indulgence towards the

infirmities of others, taught and humbled by a growing sense of my own; and have therefore ceased to wish the white sheet, or any other punishment inflicted for offences, in a degree common to us as erring mortals; not even, I humbly trust, on those who have calumniated myself.

That, notwithstanding, I never hear defamation uttered, whether it be of friend or foe, without a feeling of strong indignation.

That we have heard lawyers accused of being ready to take a bribe to lose a cause for a client; physicians and surgeons of killing their patients, either by their system, rashness, or *ignorance;*— have heard some persons accused of suppressing or forging a will, and have listened to aspersions on the fair fame of many a woman, for which the utmost vengeance of the law could be to them no recompense, and this, *in what is called good company!*

That I cannot excuse the thoughtless of my own sex, who, regardless of decorum, have been contented to be innocent, without being scrupulously careful to appear so, and who have carried liveliness to the borders of levity, and worn the semblance of errors, which they in their inmost soul abhorred. That such mistaken women must submit patiently to the consequences of their own actions; but I have known the most correct conduct not to preserve from defamation.

That there have been men and women too, who though supported by the consciousness of innocence, have yet pined through life, bowed under a sense of undeserved degradation, and sunk at length into an early grave, victims of calumnies originally uttered, perhaps, and repeated, as much in wantonness as malignity, in the orgies of a dinner table, or at the tea party of the gossip.

That I believe there are many persons of sensitive natures, and tremblingly alive to the opinion of others, who are preserved from misery, and

prevented from hiding themselves in obscurity, merely from being allowed to remain unconscious to what vile motives even their best actions are attributed. That as the somnambulist can walk in safety in the midst of peril, only while his sleep is permitted to continue, so these sensitive beings can be preserved in peace only as long as they remain ignorant of their wrongs; but inform the calumniated, and awake the sleep-walker, and wretchedness for life would, probably, be the fate of one, and dislocation or death of the other.

That my own sex must bear with me while I say, that though men are debased in my eyes whenever they bring defamatory charges against women, women appear to me more reprehensible still, when they are guilty of the same crime; and that no man would dare to slander any female in the presence of another, if we were true to ourselves; and instead of seeming to enjoy the odious tale, were to own ourselves *degraded*, as we certainly *are*, by being supposed capable of relishing it.

That I do not believe all defamation to be false, but that it is our duty to suspend our belief till doubt is impossible. That, even then we should not propagate the tale. That, if I have no personal resentment towards the offender, what motive for it can I have, but a love of evil-speaking? and if I have, I might, possibly, in doing so, be actuated by unchristian revenge.

That those who are eager to tell a tale of scandal, are doubtless ready to heighten it by invention, especially if it be against any one who has wounded their self-love.

That nothing can be more unsatisfactory than the evidence for the truth of a calumnious report.

That having given a specimen of the dialogue of talkers-over, I venture to display in another dialogue the progress of defamation.

That the defamation in this dialogue was a mean as well as criminal enjoyment, and an unsafe and fearful amusement, and wherefore—

That defamation is indeed a crime so lowering, that most persons are unwilling to own that they commit it.

That they call the slanders they hear detestable, but those they utter only retributive justice.

That I once, and only once, saw a person, as I believe, deeply impressed with the weight of the crime of defamation. And lastly, I give the anecdote alluded to.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THOSE MOST PARTICULARLY EXPOSED TO DEFAMATION.

"THERE is no rule without an exception," says the proverb, and though I firmly believe in the truth of my own system, that competition is the most abundant source of detraction, and often of defamation, still there are instances of both, which cannot be imputed to competition and rivalry.

Temper is a great provocative to defamation, and often does its work without the goad of competition, since few tempers are so sweet as not to take pleasure in venting bad feelings in bitter sayings. But when the feeling of unsuccessful competition is united to ill-governed temper, then are the consequences often frightful to contemplate, for they have sometimes led not only to defamation, but to murderous revenge. The defamer and the murderer, have undoubtedly some feelings in common, particularly such as deal in anonymous and secret slander; perhaps, nameless calumniators who wield their pen secretly and securely against those whom they hate or envy, would, if they dared, assail their persons with the knife of the assassin.

Party spirit is one never-failing source of positive defamation, and partizans of all ranks and classes are amongst the most prominent objects of it—for instance, the competition which results from an election leads to unwarrantable judgments, and infamous calumnies. There is no slander, however improbable, that the friends of one candidate will not believe and propagate of the friends of the other, and the candidates themselves are not only falsely accused at this present time, but are sure to

have even their long-forgotten, and perhaps, falsely imputed faults in days that are past, brought forward in array against them. And how powerful are party names to excite illiberal judgment? I have often heard whigs declare that there never was an honest tory, and tories assert that all whigs were rogues; and whence this narrow-minded, and other as mischievous defamation, but from the bad temper produced by party spirit? this therefore is an instance to confirm the truth of my assertion, that when competition is united to ill-governed temper, the results are formidable, and lead to fatal consequences. I have said before, that all public characters are exposed to the temptations of detraction incident to competition; but I must further observe, that ministers, members of parliament, and all public functionaries, together with kings, princes, and persons of high rank, are the objects of constant defamation, even where the utterers can be in no competition with them; namely, amongst the middle classes in society. I have known individuals in private life, who would scruple to spread a report to the disadvantage of an acquaintance or neighbor, willing to believe and eager to propagate a slander against a royal personage, or a ministerial or opposition leader. Sometimes, perhaps, this also may be accounted for by *party spirit*, but not always, as princesses, and women of high rank who are not politically prominent, are also the subjects of their calumnious reports. Perhaps this is sometimes occasioned by vanity; the speakers may wish to appear conversant with royal and titled persons themselves, or with those who associate with them.

But a spotless reputation is, no doubt, as precious to princes and princesses, and members of the aristocracy of the country, as to others. It is, therefore, a remarkable instance of the inconsistency of human nature, that scrupulous and conscientious persons should believe and propagate almost impossible slander against the royal and the high born, which the speakers would neither credit nor report

of those in their own rank of life; nor is the instigation of vanity, nor even a sense of *general competition*, sufficient to account, *entirely*, for this obliquity. Kings are worse off in this respect than any of their subjects, for though it is treason to devise aught against the *life* of a king, there is no punishment, that I know of, for taking away his moral character; and as it is thought particularly base and cowardly to insult a clergyman, because his profession prevents him from taking what *the world calls* the satisfaction of a gentleman, it is equally so to propagate reports against one whose prominent situation in society exposes him to particular remark, and who is prevented by his elevated station from gaining redress for the injurious defamation to which his rank makes him peculiarly liable. There is one consideration, however, which may reconcile us to these highly-aimed shafts of detraction and defamation;—namely, the belief, that as kings, princes, and nobles, are made of the same corrupt nature as ourselves, there is little doubt but that they in their turn believe, and propagate, evil reports of each other, and even of those below them, and that therefore when they are hardly judged and ungenerously defamed, it may often be deserved retribution.

There is one question which I feel it imperative upon me to put to my readers of every description, who believe the commandments to be of divine authority, whether they be in the world or separated from it, whether they be members of the church of England, or sectarians, Jew or Gentile; namely:—

How is it, that you, who would shrink with virtuous horror from being even supposed capable of violating the 6th, 7th, or 8th commandments, should have no scruple against violating the 9th?—

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

Yet, taking up and propagating reports, the truth of which we cannot prove, is a positive violation of

the ninth commandment, and he who gave them requires the same obedience to them all. Therefore, though it is certainly more difficult for many of us to keep the 9th, than the 6th 7th and 8th commandments, no one who has any real religious belief can deny that it is equally imperative on us; and I doubt not, but at the day of final and righteous retribution, the cold-blooded malignity of the murderers of reputations will be as awfully dealt with, as the more violent passions of the ruffian and the assassin, by the DIVINE JUSTICE.

I shall conclude this chapter with some admirable extracts on "Lying Defamation," from the Government of the Tongue.

"As in the case of stealing it is proverbially said, that if there were no receivers there would be no thieves; so in this of slander, if there were fewer spreaders, there would be fewer forgers of libels; the manufacture would be discouraged, if it had not these retailers to put off the wares. Now to apply these practices to our rule of duty, there will need no very close inspection to discern the obliquity. The most superficial glance will evidence these several degrees of slanderers to do what they would not be willing to suffer.

"And, indeed, it is observable, that those who make the greatest havoc of other men's reputation, are the most nicely tender of their own; which sets this sin of calumny in a most diametrical opposition to the evangelical precept of loving our neighbors as ourselves.

"He that shoots an arrow in jest, may kill a man in earnest; and he that gives himself liberty to play with his neighbor's fame, may soon play it away. Most men have such an aptness to entertain sinister opinions of others, that they greedily draw in any suggestion of that kind; and one may as easily persuade the thirsty earth to refund the water she has sucked into her veins, as them to deposit a prejudice they have once taken up. Therefore such

experiments upon fame are as dangerous as that which Alexander is said to have made of the force of Naphtha upon his page, from which he scarce escaped with life.

"Since slander is a plant that can grow in all soils, since the frolic humors as well as the morose betray to the guilt, who can hope to escape this scourge of the tongue, as the wise man calls it, Eccl. xxvi. 6, which communicates with all? Persons of all ranks do mutually asperse, and are aspersed; so that he who would not have his credulity abused has scarce a securer way, than (like that astrologer, who made his almanack give a tolerable account of the weather by a direct inversion of the common prognosticators,) to let his belief run quite counter to reports."

I shall here say in recapitulation,

That temper is a great provocative to defamation, and bad feelings are often vented in bitter sayings.

That defamers and murderers have feelings in common; and that anonymous and secret slanderers would, probably, if they dared, assail the subjects of their calumnies with the knife of the assassin.

That party-spirit is one never-failing source of positive defamation.

That though competition is the chief source of detraction, and often of defamation, these sometimes exist where there is no competition; as persons in the middle classes of life are apt to believe and propagate scandalous stories of kings and princes, and all public characters.

That kings are worse off in this respect than their subjects, as they are prevented by their high rank from obtaining redress for the calumnious judgments to which it exposes them, but

That, as they and other persons of high rank

are probably guilty of evil speaking themselves, these their injuries may be only retributive justice.

That those who are incapable of violating the 6th, 7th, and 8th commandments, make no scruple to violate the 9th, yet that obedience to them *all* is imperative on us: and I conclude this chapter with extracts from "Lying Defamation."

CHAPTER XV.

PREVENTIVES AGAINST DETRACTION.

I HAVE now to the best of my ability illustrated the name of my work, and proved its right to the title of "Detraction Displayed."

Now, therefore, as the medical writer, after giving a detail of different diseases, gives also such prescriptions as he deems cures or preventives, I venture, though with much humility, to mention some preventives at least for the diseases of detraction and defamation.

On those who are denominated MEN AND WOMEN OF THE WORLD, their religious belief, however sincere, is not sufficiently operative, surrounded as they are by snares of all sorts, to teach them "the Government of the Tongue," nor to convince them that it is a sin not to govern it; and they must be candid and indulgent indeed, not to despise as righteous overmuch the presumptuous monitor who urges upon them the necessity, as *responsible* beings, of "bridling the tongue."

Still there are motives of a *worldly* nature, which as reasonable beings they cannot despise. As reasonable beings they must admit, that if they could be contented to resign their commissions in the large army of "talkers-over" and "laughers-at," they would feel that they were acquiring a claim to impunity for themselves. Detractors and defamers have no right to suppose that their sins against the reputation of others will not be visited by similar incursions on their own, for they who wound the victims in the back, are fair objects for the same mean warfare themselves. It is in vain for us to assert what is said of us does not signify, if we do

not hear it; for we all know that some one or other, either from a bad or a good motive, will take care to tell us what was never intended for our ears; therefore, the safest way, both for others and for ourselves, is to endeavor to raise the tone of conversation. Men and women of the world can be at no loss for subjects, as they have public places, as well as poetry, painting, and music, to discuss, together with the lighter reading of the day; and there are politics, polity, and science, for the discussion of the wiser sex. Therefore, nothing but a deep-rooted love of evil-speaking can lead any description of persons in civilized society to make their neighbors' faults and follies their chief theme; though the mere love of talking, and habit of gossipping, may often be the chief source of detracting observations.*

And I recommend to men and women of the world, as a preventive for detraction, severe SELF-EXAMINATION. Without self-examination, the result of which is self-knowledge, we are are all liable to incur the excessive ridicule of blaming in others the very sins of which we are notoriously guilty ourselves. Often have I heard with fearful emotion, or ill-suppressed laughter, even sensible persons of my acquaintance congratulating themselves, that whatever were their other failings, they had not the fault which they and I were imputing to the

* A sensible friend of mine has assured me that she is conscious of often having made a lowering remark, and repeated a gossipping story, from the dread of appearing dull, and that afterwards she has said to herself in a reproving spirit, why did I make that unsatisfactory observation? to this suggestion, because it was hers, I have given much consideration, but I still think that so deep and intricate are the ramifications of motives, that even on this occasion, it might have been some competition past or present, with the person or persons of whom she was speaking, which led her, however unconsciously, *to the choice of her subject.* Be that as it may, it is from intellectual individuals like her, self-reproved for having uttered detraction, and conscious of its sinfulness, that I expect those fearless efforts against this darling vice, that shall make even every day society, the means of individual benefit, and universal improvement.

acquaintance of whom we were talking, which fault was one of the most evident defects of the person speaking! and I have said to myself, how can I be sure without close self-examination that I am not under an equal degree of self-delusion, and that the fault I am reprobating is not my own! Often has this question been addressed to me, "Is not Mrs. such a one, or Mr. or Miss so and so very satirical?" and I have been tempted to the vulgarity of quoting the old proverb, "set a thief to catch a thief," because the persons, so asking, have been amongst the most satirical of my acquaintances. It is an incentive to avoid detraction, that every one is alive to the sin of detraction in others, and equally so to the superior charm of those who are free from it.

One day when I had listened with almost loathing dislike to the incessant detraction of certain individuals in company, I heard the most lavish encomiums uttered by them on a friend of theirs, for never being known to utter an unkind or detractory remark! and to this uncommon merit, they attributed his being more courted and respected than some of his relations who were his superiors in rank and talent! I could not refrain from saying to them, "what a pity it is, that those who so much admire his forbearance, should not endeavor to imitate it!"* But I have very rarely felt either a right or a power so to reprove. It is much easier, as I have found, to fall into the fault I condemn, than to endeavor to lead others into better habits; and to the universality of this want of moral courage, is chiefly attributable the continued prevalence of all vices in society.

* Since I began this work, some persons have said to me, "Well, I hope so and so will read your book, they want it I am sure, and I think it may do them good;" while the speakers seemed *wholly unconscious* that *they themselves* wanted the rule of admonition full as much as those whom they thus detractingly mentioned—reminding me of the lines of the Satirist,

> Yes, the evil one dwells at Paris and Rome,
> What a blessing for *us* that it is not *at home*.

How do we see quarrelling and fighting in t and none attempting to separate the con cause, say the standers by, "it is not ou and it is difficult and dangerous to interfe refore the combatants are allowed to most horrid blasphemies, and sometimes ther's lives in peril, because "it is diffi perhaps "dangerous to interfere!"

It is on a like this that we allow detracting and defamatory conversations to go on in our presence.

It is "*difficult* to interfere," but it is by no means impossible: the difficulty would vanish as soon as it was firmly met, and the speakers, if not silenced, would soon have the mortification of feeling that they disgusted, where they hoped to amuse. Certain it is, that of all knowledge, that of one's self is the most necessary but the most *difficult* of acquirement. The following fable, from Æsop, corroborates this mournful truth.

SELF-ADMIRATION,

OR

JUPITER AND THE ANIMALS.

Once on a time, the whole creation
By Jupiter were call'd before him;
To please and serve them was his inclination,
And make his subjects more and more adore him.
"My friends, if with your forms (he said)
You've any faults to find, or with your faces,
Tell me their wants, and from tail, leg, or head,
I'll take defects away and give new graces.
Come, my dear ape, speak thou the first! behold
This crowd of animals, both young and old,
And then their charms with thine compare;
Say, art thou satisfied? "Yes, I declare
I'm quite content," replied the ape;

"I have four feet and such a graceful shape,
That I in pictures love to see myself;
But for my brother bear, poor half-licked elf!
He is not fit to have his portrait painted,
As all must think who are with art acquainted;
For all must own, poor animal, ill-starr'd,
He is not *made* or was in *making marr'd*;"
The bear came forward next, and all conceiv'd
He of his ugliness would have complain'd,
But no such thing; for, can it be believ'd,
He, by no sense of modesty restrain'd,
Prais'd, poor blind brute, his own surprising beauty!
But, as a friend, he said "It was his duty,
(And in his duty he would never fail,)
To say, he thought his brother elephant
In some respects did much improvement want,
And that it would his ugliness decrease,
If from his flapping ears Jove took a piece,
To add unto his tiny tail.
For that the elephant as *yet*, alas!
Was an incongruous, shapeless, monstrous mass!"
The elephant himself now spoke;
And all expected one so wise
Would see himself with proper eyes,
And even on his ugliness would joke;
But he, like Bruin, lauded his own charms,
Adding, "His friend, the whale,
Had such a frightful appetite;
To see her eat was a disgusting sight,
And gave him really ugly qualms;
For that to him 'twas quite a *dose*
To see a lady animal so gross."
The ant observ'd, "The mite was far too small
And by her side could not be *seen at all.*
In short, both large and little creatures,
Thinking themselves the beauties of brute nature,
To Jove's amusement, self-conceited elves!
Each other criticis'd, but prais'd themselves.
"Well, well," cried Jupiter, their gracious sire,
"I'm glad you're satisfied—you may retire."
Next came the human race, and made it plain,
That they the vainest were of all the vain;
And Jove declar'd he ne'er was more disgusted,

Since, to judge others, they could not be trusted;
And thus, to mortify their pride,
Their just reprover cried,
"O! men and women! partial, proud, and blind,
Harsh to your brethren, to yourselves too kind;
You are, as in all your judgment shown,
Lynxes to OTHERS' faults, *moles* to YOUR OWN."

It may be disputed, but I believe it to be a certain fact, that few persons possess any more than the animals in the fable, an accurate idea of their own faces and forms.

They know, perhaps, what their glasses every day present to their view, though they may not observe the changes, the result of advancing years, so evident to others; but they have no knowledge of the shape of their head and features in any other way than in a front view. Hence, even first-rate painters are in the habit of hearing, "Well, I cannot believe my nose sticks out in that manner; surely, my upper lip is not so long or so thick." "Well, I did not think I had so little or so much chin, or I was so ill-looking;" or "well, I dare say it is quite as handsome as I am, but it is very like that ugly such a one. Now, if it be so impossible for individuals to know with accuracy more than one view of their own features and forms, and as most persons are satisfied to remain in this ignorance, though very little trouble would remove it, can one believe that any of us can have an accurate knowledge of the secret failings of our minds and hearts, without severe self-examination? and if our self-love, with very rare exceptions, is so shocked at any personal defect forced upon our view, is it not probable that we should be equally shocked at having the portrait of our heart and minds exhibit[illegible] nd should we not exclaim, "Surely that [illegible] esetting sin; I may err in that way but [illegible]' disputing the correctness and fidelity of [illegible] picture, resolving to turn away from wh[illegible] and human pride cannot bear to conten[illegible]

Therefore, is not severe self-examination necessary to make us sure we are not exposing ourselves to the ridicule mentioned above, of censuring others for the very faults which we ourselves commit, and the only means of escaping those detracting laughs which we are apt to raise against others. Is not self-examination necessary to show us the ugliness of our own hearts, the face of which, considering motives as the features, we shall see deformed with envy, resentment, and uncharitable suspicions; and having thus learnt to see ourselves as we are, would not self-examination lead us to study the hearts of others, and to consider whether, as mere beings of *this* world, it would not be more politic, and greatly add to our advantage here, to try to purify our own motives, to cleanse our own conversation, and rectify our own views of our associates, in order to invite them to judge us with our own liberality?

I take it for granted that no one likes to be laughed at; "then let us take care not to laugh at others;" for as there is said to be "honor amongst thieves," so there may be an understood compact even amongst detractors, that those who show indulgence to others, indulgence shall be shown; therefore, they who have sufficient self-control to abstain from satire, even where satire is the general theme, will, in the end, be so much respected, that they may cease to be the objects of satire themselves, and if their example does not allure, it may at least, where they are concerned, silence and disarm.

Defamers, as I have before said, are permitted to shed their poison with impunity, because no one likes to inform against them, and expose them to the penalties of the law; but even they, as far as merely worldly advantages are concerned, would be gainers by suppressing the malignity of their accusations. For what is the appalling observation made on notorious defamers? "Oh! never mind what *they* say, their authority is worth nothing, their

tongue is no scandal." Horrible state of degradation! to be known as such lying defamers, (for habitual falsehood is implied,) that they cannot even do the mischief they desire to do, but are rendered impotent as well as infamous! Social debasement can scarcely go beyond it! and even the crime with which the defamer charges his victim may possibly not degrade them more than such an observation degrades the utterer. Existence on such terms is little better than annihilation; with such a character as this, life is scarcely worthy having! If these obnoxious persons be wealthy and hospitable, they may continue to be associated with, for the sake of their good cheer; but the entertained visit their entertainer at the risk of deadly wounds to their fame from his tongue, as soon as they have quitted the room, while the prudent and independent feel, that their only security is keeping as much as possible out of their way. But, if defamers are not opulent, and if they are desirous of obtaining promotion and advancement through the medium of friends, it is impossible that with such habits they can long have a friend to assist them. Those who are known to sacrifice, at any time, even the good name of patron or relative, to the temptation of making no amusing story, must expect to be sacrificed in their turn to the interests of more respectable claimants; for few individuals are so little under the salutary fear of the world, as to set its censure at defiance, and give good gifts to those who are notorious for inflicting injuries on others, and are known by the name of unprincipled defamers. Therefore, even in a mere worldly view, it is clear that it is the interest of us all to abstain from defamation and detraction.

Let me here insert, to confirm my belief that worldly policy recommends the defamer to alter his ways and bridle his tongue, the following admirable observations: "We have viewed both these branches of detraction, seen both the sins and mischief of them, we may now join together in a con-

cluding observation, which is, that they are as imprudent, as they are unchristian. It has been received amongst the maxims of civil life, not unnecessarily to exasperate any body, to which agrees the advice of an ancient philosopher, 'Speak not evil of thy neighbor, if thou dost thou shalt hear that which will not fail to trouble thee.' There is no person so inconsiderable but may at some time or other do a displeasure, but in this of defaming, men need no harnessing, no preparation; every man has his weapons ready for a return, so that none can shoot these arrows, but they must expect they will revert with a rebounded force, not only to the violation of Christian unity (as I have before observed,) but to the aggressors' great secular detriment, both in fame and interest also. Revenge is sharp-sighted, and overlooks no opportunity of a retaliation; and that commonly not bounded, as the Levitical ones were, 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,' no, nor by the larger proportions of their restitutions foretold, but extended to the utmost power of the inflictor. The examples are innumerable of men who have thus laid themselves open in their concerns, and have let loose the tongue of others against them, merely because they would put no restraint upon their own, which is so great indiscretion, that to them we may apply that of Solomon, 'A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.' And now, who can sufficiently wonder that a practice that so thwarts our interest in both worlds, should come universally to prevail among us? Yet that it does so, I may appeal to the consciences of most, and to the observation of us all. What so common topic of discourse is there as this of backbiting our neighbors? Come into company of all ages, all ranks, all professions, this is the constant entertainment; and I doubt he that at night shall duly recollect the occurrences of the day, shall very rarely be able to say he has spent it without hearing or speaking (perhaps both) somewhat of this kind. Nay, even

those who restrain themselves from other liberties are often apt to indulge in this. Many who are so just to their neighbor's property, that, as Abraham once said, Gen. xiv. 23. "They would not take from him even from a thread to a shoe latchet, are yet so inconsiderate of his fame as to find themselves discourse at the expense of that, though infinitely a greater injury than the robbing of his coffer."

By way of recapitulating this chapter I would remind the reader,

That having proved the right of my work to the title of "Detraction Displayed," I have ventured to give some preventives for the diseases of detraction and defamation.

That their religious belief, however sincere, is not sufficiently operative on men and women of the world to teach them the government of the tongue, but that there are motives of worldly policy sufficient to teach them the necessity of it.

That by ceasing to be talkers-over and laughers-at, they would be acquiring a claim to impunity for themselves.

That men and women of the world have so many amusing subjects to talk upon, that they have no excuse for indulging in evil-speaking.

That I recommend SELF-EXAMINATION as a preventive against the risk of incurring ridicule for censuring in others the faults which we ourselves commit.

That even detractors and defamers are alive to the superior charm of those who never utter an unkind remark, and are ready to admire and praise them.

That as fighting in the streets is allowed to continue because by-standers feel it difficult, and perhaps dangerous to interfere, so from the same want of moral courage, we let detractors and defamers pursue their evil-speaking in our presence; yet that the difficulty of reproving would soon vanish if firmly met.

That a knowledge of self is the most difficult of all knowledge, and I give a fable to illustrate this position.

That defamers are permitted to shed their poison with impunity, because no one likes to expose them to the punishments of the law.

That defamers even would be gainers, in a worldly point of view, by learning to suppress their malignant accusations; for that they run the risk of being shunned at length on account of the terror and aversion excited by their character for defamation, and that if they require assistance and promotion, even their best friends must shrink from the obloquy of bestowing it upon them, and I conclude with a confirmatory quotation.

CHAPTER XVI.

ADDRESS TO RELIGIOUS PROFESSORS.

I NOW address that class in society, which professes to be guided and restrained by motives and views of the very highest kind, namely, the constant presence of RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES; and if they be enabled to act up to this high profession, they do not require to be warned against the sin of detraction and the crime of defamation. But even religious professors are not secure from the temptations of the soul's adversary: their only advantage is, that they have stronger weapons at hand with which to oppose him. They know that evil-speaking is every where forbidden in that book, by which they profess to regulate their lives; but then, they also know, that "when they would do good, evil is present with them," and that unless they watch and pray they must fall into temptation like other people. But the universality of the sin of detraction, if not of defamation, in all circles, tends to veil its enormity from the view; and though we are told that "we should not follow a multitude to do evil," we do follow them, and it is difficult to forbear, even though we could repeat text upon text against the sin we are committing. Indeed, were I to give all the texts in scripture which forbid evil speaking, they are so many and various, that these pages would look like a concordance; but I shall only mention here the 5th and 7th chapters of Matthew, and quote only as follows, from the 13th chapter of Corinthians: "*And though*," says the apostle, "*I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*" How evident it is that

though the passage which I have given in Italics is often used as a text to a charity sermon, charity here does not mean *giving alms*, but *Christian love;* that is, kindly feeling towards one another; the love or charity which "*thinketh no evil*," "which suffereth long and is kind;" what, therefore, can be more opposite to the precepts of the apostle, than backbiting and speaking ill of our fellow-creatures? Yet it is much easier to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, to visit the sick, to exhort the sinful, to deny ourselves in order to give to others, and to pray with the dying and the sorrowful, than to forbear from uttering one harsh judgment, to suppress one backbiting, angry, and injurious word, and to curb the ungenerous impulse of a suspicious spirit. And no wonder; for those who perform the Christian duties, which I have enumerated above, have not only the approbation of their own consciences, and the sweet hope that their good works have been acceptable obedience to their Saviour's precepts,—but, however careful they may be not to let "their left hand know what their right hand doeth," they have also the respect and praise of men to excite them to persevere in their course of duty, and even *here* the actively benevolent have their reward. Therefore, I maintain, that to "do good and to communicate," and give, whether it be of our time, of our savings, or our riches, to the wants of others, is by no means the most difficult of tasks. But the conquest of our bad passions, our conflicts with our envious and resentful feelings, our struggles against the utterance of a degrading suspicion and a detracting word, and our endeavor to fulfil the command, "to think charitably of all men," all these take place in the secret of the heart, and are only known to that Being "from whom no secrets are hidden;" therefore, we have no *external* aid to make us victors in the combat. If we resist these temptations to evil, no one will give us credit for the forbearance; and if we yield to them, we shall, probably, not be thought the worse of, since we

know we shall not sin alone. No wonder, therefore, that sometimes religious professors are known to be guilty of this sin of detraction; and it is doubly painful to hear those who fulfil to the utmost the other Christian duties, indulge a gossiping, uncharitable, and calumnious disposition, imputing unworthy motives to the absent and the unconscious, in seeming defiance of the precepts of the blessed Saviour, and of his inspired followers. But when serious Christians are guilty of detraction, it cannot be, I trust, without a subsequent and deep conviction of their own sinfulness. They have the precious consciousness that they *are* sinners, and that they are liable to fall; they also know that they have a sure defence, in their moments of trial, "in watchfulness unto prayer;" and if there be any of these strongly tempted, consciously erring Christians, among my readers, *endangered* souls who know from painful experience, that "the tongue is an unruly member," and that detraction is one of their besetting temptations; let them recollect, that alms-giving and the kindest offices of Christian duty, without Christian love, can "profit them nothing," and at the close of a day of active benevolence, if they feel conscious that though their *hand gave*, their *tongue maligned*, let them not claim for their pillow, that night, the peaceful repose of the *consistent Christian;* but, warned by the consciousness of duty imperfectly performed, humble themselves before the Being who has said, "judge not," and let them remember and profit by the awful admonition, "Let those who think they stand take heed lest they fall."

I would also remind them of the declaration of the apostle James: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

Let me now recapitulate by observing,

That that class of persons in society who profess to be under *religious influences*, would not want to be warned against the sin of detraction, and the

crime of defamation, were not they, like other persons, exposed to the assaults of the soul's adversary, and that their only advantage lies in having stronger weapons with which to oppose him.

That they, like others, must watch and pray, lest they fall into temptation.

That the charity enjoined by the apostle Paul is Christian love, not alms-giving.

That it is easier to perform all the other duties of Christians, than to suppress one severe remark, one backbiting, injurious word.

That the world's good report attends and repays deeds of active benevolence; but that our conflicts with our jealous feelings and defamatory propensities are hidden in the secret of our hearts, and we have not the aid of external praise to assist us to conquer them.

And, lastly, that they must remember, in order to strengthen them in their struggles, the words of the apostle James, chapter 1st, verse 26th.

CHAPTER XVII.

ADDRESS TO THE YOUNGER MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

PERMIT me now, my dear brothers and sisters, members of the society to which I have the privilege of belonging, to address you on this subject, as Friends have always deeply felt, and duly considered its importance, and have also by their wise regulations endeavored to guard against the sin of which it treats. In us, therefore, who are defended against this sin by official warnings, and reminded of its ensnaring power, by the following query read at stated times in our meetings of discipline,—"Are Friends preserved in love towards each other; and are they careful to avoid and discourage tale-bearing and detraction?" in us I say, detraction is less excusable than in any others. But it may be right for me to add, lest this query be misunderstood by some of my readers; that it does not mean we are to cultivate a Christian spirit towards the members of our society alone.

We know that the feelings of gospel love are of a more diffusive nature, that we are to desire the welfare of the whole family of mankind, and to endeavor to promote it to our best ability; and though, according to the apostle's words, "we may be willing more especially to do good to those who are of the household of faith," still we are expected to perform the offices of Christian duty to all who require them of us, be they Jew or Gentile, and the warning against tale-bearing and detraction is of universal not particular application.

Seeing then, that the wisdom of our pious ances-

tors has thus afforded us an earthly guard against this ensnaring sin, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

But I would more particularly call on you, my dear younger brethren and sisters, to remember the obligation of watchfulness which this query imposes upon you, as you are a party to the answer given; and if your consciences accuse you of having acted or spoken contrary to that duty which it inculcates, you must be well aware that you are also a party to an imposition, and a falsehood, unless the answer to the query be guarded in an almost impossible degree.

My observation tells me that the young, whatever be their belief or situation, are always more or less inclined to satire.

The young feel deeply, and think superficially; with them appearances are almost every thing. To the ridiculous in persons and things they are peculiarly alive; foibles they perceive immediately; and as they have not yet learnt to feel their own infirmities, they have no mercy on those of others! indulgence, owing to their want of self-knowledge, never being the character of youth;—hence, hasty and uncandid judgment, and a love of finding out the absurd, attended often with great power of ridicule, make the young of both sexes apt to indulge in satire and detraction. Vanity also comes into play. They fancy that severity looks like wit and intellectual superiority; and I have sometimes, with no inconsiderable moral disgust, heard parents repeat the pert satirical sayings of their children, as evidences, in their opinion, no doubt, of precocity and brightness of intellect.

With this conviction on my mind of the disadvantages as well as advantages belonging to the brilliant season of youth, I have often contemplated

with admiration, amongst many other of the benefits peculiar to our society, this query relative to tale-bearing and detraction.

Detraction is so universal that one forgets it is a sin, or we are reconciled to commit it, because we have so many to keep us in countenance. "As in some instances," says the author of the Government of the Tongue, "detraction is one of the highest sins, so in the general, it is certainly one of the most common; and by being so becomes insensible. This vice above all others seems to have maintained not only its empire but its reputation too. Men are not yet convinced heartily that it is a sin, or if any, not of so deep a dye, or so wide an extent, as it really is. They have, if not false, yet imperfect notions of it, and by not knowing how far its circle reaches, do often, like young conjurors, step beyond the limits of their safety. This I am the apter to believe, because I see some degree of fault cleave to those who have eminently corrected all other exorbitances of the tongue. Many who would startle at an oath, do yet glide glibly into a detraction, which yet, methinks, persons otherwise of strict conversation should not do frequently and habitually, had not their easy thoughts of the guilt smoothed the way to it. It may therefore be no unkind attempt to try to disentangle from this snare by displaying it, showing the whole contexture of the sin, how it is woven with threads of different sizes, yet the least of them strong enough to noose and entrap us: and alas! if satan fetters us, it is indifferent to him whether it be by a cable or a hair. "Nay, perhaps, the smallest sins are his greatest stratagems. It was a good reply of Plato's to one who murmured at his reproving him for a small matter: "custom," says he, "is no small matter," and, indeed, supposing any sin were so small as we are willing to fancy most, yet an indulgent habit even of that would be certainly ruinous, that indulgence being perfectly opposite to the love of God, which better can consist with indeliberate commissions of

many sins, than with an allowed persistance in any one. But in this matter of detraction I cannot yield that any is small; save comparatively with some kind that is greater, for absolutely considered, there is even in the very lowest degrees of it a flat contradiction to the grand rule of charity, the loving our neighbors as ourselves."

If this be true, my dear young friends,—if detraction, by being so common a sin, "becomes an insensible one also," and if men are not convinced heartily that it is a sin, how thankful we ought to be for being reminded so frequently that it is sinful, and for being guarded against it in a manner so impressive and sufficient, that though the rest of the world should be imperceptibly entangled in this snare, "woven with threads of different sizes, the least of them strong enough to noose and entrap them," we must be without excuse for letting ourselves be so entrapped; and if we have, in a moment of unguardedness allowed the snare to envelop us, it is our own fault, if we be not roused by the voice of the stated watchman to exert ourselves, and break the fetters ere they have had time to fasten on us.

Believe me, my beloved younger brothers and sisters, that those only who have been born and bred in different circumstances to yourselves, can properly appreciate the advantages attendant on your religious society; and that you *cannot* be sufficiently aware of them; for there are many things of whose value, like that of health, we are unconscious, because we have always possessed them. For instance, who but must be struck, on reading accounts of missionary labors, at the enthusiastic delight experienced by the converted heathen, when the Bible is given them, and they are enabled to peruse its contents? We, to whom it has been familiar, even from childhood, cannot experience the same freshness of delight, while perusing the sacred volume, as these grateful converts feel. In like manner you, by whom the privileges

of your sect have been experienced even from the first hour of perception, cannot be sufficiently conscious how much safety and benefit you have derived from them in youth, of which you will continue to feel the good effects in your maturer years, and in your life's decline. And though some of you may in the season of youth desire for yourselves more liberty, and more accordance with the habits of the world at large, you will, when you are parents, (with very few exceptions at least,) desire for your children the same restraints which you are feeling now; you will remember with thankfulness, that if they *pained* they *preserved*, that if they imposed on you temporary privations, they saved you from many evils and certain dangers, and you will endeavor to persuade those nearest and dearest to you, to profit by the lessons of your experience, and say to them in the words of sacred writ, "This is the way; walk ye in it!" But, to return to my original subject, the benefit which we derive or ought to derive, from this query: "Are Friends preserved in love towards each other, and are they careful to avoid and discourage tale-bearing and detraction?" Indeed, dear friends, in order to avoid them, we, like others, have much to do, and it is right that we should make use of every weapon against the spirit of detraction, which He, who can alone make our efforts successful, has in his mercy bestowed.

Let us then endeavor to consider them together, and SELF-EXAMINATION again presents itself on the list.

Let us examine our own motives and actions before we speak defamingly or detractingly of those of others. Let us consider their temptations, their disadvantages, of every sort, and then reflect whether we are ourselves free from the faults which we condemn, and whether, in their circumces, we should have acted better. We must ask of our own hearts, how we should like to be dealt with ourselves, and whether we should not require

to have any calumnious tale against us strictly inquired into, not only before it is believed, but before it is repeated; and if we make all the use of self-examination of which it is capable, it will show us that the time which, with gratuitous officiousness, we were disposed to bestow in commenting on others' failings, would be far better employed in endeavors to amend our own; for even to the young "the night cometh in which no man can work;" and as the habits of youth are yet to form, and if formed, must be easy to eradicate, youth is the best season for self-examination. Oh! then, ye young, "set a watchman, and let him declare what he seeth," and be that watchman SELF-EXAMINATION, and when the watchman says, "the morning cometh, and also the night, if ye will inquire, inquire ye," let the inquiry be into your *own* defects, not into those of your neighbors, considering not the "mote that is in your brother's eye, but the beam that is in your own."

Another most efficient safeguard against the snares of detraction is CULTIVATION OF THE MIND. Those who have full minds need not talk of *persons* to beguile the time, because they have topics of a much higher kind, and of equal interest to discuss; and a degree of mental cultivation is within the power of every one. The tradesman, the artificer, the mechanic, in short, all persons who can read, and who are resolved to lose no time, can, if they will, acquire some information even at what appears allowable *waste moments*. A friend of mind who was almost the only person I ever knew that was a punctual correspondent, acquired this reputable distinction, by the simple habit of never being idle; and whenever she was kept waiting by a friend, or a coachman, instead of fretting and going to the window, and walking up and down the room, losing her time as well as her patience, she used to sit down and write letters, by which means a very extensive correspondence never interfered with her other duties, as the time devoted to it was literally

what is usually considered *waste* time. This highly gifted individual wisely considered the importance of *moments*. That excellent old proverb, "take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves," meaning that those who do not spend pence wantonly, will always be sure to have pounds, and that those who waste pence will never have pounds to waste, may be applied to the proper use of moments; considering *moments* as the *pence* of time, and *hours* as its *pounds;* for those who take care of their *moments*, will find them soon amount to *well-stored hours*, while they who waste *moments* will never find their *hours* long enough for their *improvement;* and let me assure even the most hardly-worked of those who may read these pages, that when their day's labor is over, they would derive more refreshment from taking a book of history, morals, poetry, or science, something to think or converse about, than from lounging away their waste or leisure moments in gossiping, and what they call *a little relaxation;* and, on the same principle which led my friend to write letters, that no time might be lost, I would advise both sexes to turn their leisure moments to account by perusing some instructive pages, which may lead to instructive conversation, and preclude not only the *necessity*, but the wish for the excitement of gossip, talebearing, and detraction.

THINKING BEFORE WE SPEAK would prove a remedy for detracting tendencies, by enabling us to put this query to our own hearts. "Should I like to have what I am disposed to say in depreciation of such and such persons repeated to them?" and if it answers, "No!" then it is obvious that the remark should not be made; this, therefore, may be laid down as a rule for our guide, whenever we are tempted to indulge in the sin of detraction.

But if we can with truth assert that what we were going to say, though it be in *blame*, we are *willing* to say in the presence of the individuals blamed, still it would be better to say it to those in-

dividuals themselves, and not at all in their absence, because it would be kind to make it to *them*, but positively *un*kind to point it out to others. Serious reflection would also lead to this consideration, the time is at best but short that we can spend with each other in this transitory state of existence; would it not be right, therefore, to endeavor to engage in profitable discourse? If gay conversation be desired by the company present, it is possible to be innocent and gay, as well as "merry and wise," for it is not necessary that our mirth should be derived from ridiculing the defects of our acquaintance. How checked would this propensity to satirical mirth be, even in the most thoughtless, if they were to fancy to themselves the objects of their ridicule listening or looking in at the windows! and how many a satirical speech would thus be suppressed, how many a scandalous tale would be prevented, and how incalculably great would be the benefits derived to our daily and social intercourse. "Think before you speak," is another rule which, if acted upon, would prevent much evil-speaking; for it is often said, and perhaps justly, that many persons satirize, and even calumniate their fellow-creatures, from mere thoughtlessness, and without any intention to do harm. If this be true, great indeed would be the advantage of *thinking before we speak*.

"DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD THAT OTHERS SHOULD DO UNTO YOU," is a maxim which I recommend to the attention of us all. When Lewis the fourteenth asked the Maréchal Turènne what he required to enable him to carry on a successful war, he replied, "Money;" "What next?" "Money," "And what next?" "Money;" meaning that money was all that was necessary for the purpose: and in like manner, I believe, that were this sacred maxim acted upon, it would be sufficient to prevent any indulgence in detraction or defamation.

But it may seem impossible to some, to bring

restraining motives quickly enough to bear on arising temptations: self-examination, serious reflection, and remembered texts are, say they, "things too ponderous to be easily moved, and used on every sudden occasion," but the power of thought is swift as lightning. It is not of so much importance to us, whether, "ideas are presented to the mind synchronously, or whether the one succeeds to the other without any perceptible interval of time;" but certain it is, that ideas pass through the mind with surprising velocity, so much so, that as the primitive colors, when painted on a card, will, if the card be rapidly turned round, lose every distinct hue, and become to the eye one white whole, so ideas, however numerous and however important, are capable of rapidly forming themselves into one thought or reflection, and of possessing, however *suddenly* required, an impelling or restraining power. Therefore let no one be discouraged from attempting to bring the best and weightiest motives into action in seasons of temptation, from a belief of not being able to summon them quick enough. Like the slaves of the lamp in the Arabian tale, summon them, however slightly, and they will instantly appear, ready to do your work, if you are but willing that work should be done. And who is there amongst us that knows not, at times, the efficacy of deep and sudden prayer? There are other recollections and other motives, which, to the serious amongst you, must already be often present, and I trust efficacious. And these are the convictions that evil-speaking in all its branches is contrary to the revealed will, both in the Old and New Testament. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer," saith the Lord by the mouth of his servant Moses; and the Psalmist says, "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" "He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor." But no doubt you are all of you too well acquainted

with scripture, to make many quotations on this subject necessary here; I shall therefore content myself with the indulgence of repeating the all-sufficient injunctions of "Him who spoke as never man spoke." "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged, condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned. Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation, and what I say unto you (says the blessed Lord) I say unto all, watch."

In recapitulation I must now observe, that as the wisdom of our ancestors has guarded us against the besetting sin of Detraction, Friends have less excuse than most others, if they fall into it.

That I call on my younger brethren and sisters, more particularly, to remember the obligation to watchfulness, which this query imposes,—as they also are a party to the answer.

That my observation tells me, all young persons, whatever be their situation or religious creed, are more or less given to satire.

That being conscious of the natural tendency of youth to detraction, I have contemplated with admiration, amongst the other benefits peculiar to our society, the query relative to tale-bearing and detraction.

That detraction is the more ensnaring, because it is so common one forgets it is a sin.

That we ought to be very thankful, therefore, for the query in question.

That those only who have been born and bred in different circumstances to Friends, can sufficiently appreciate the advantages and privileges of our religious society.

That Friends, born in the society, cannot feel the peculiar advantages, of which they have felt, and will continue to feel, the good consequences, to the end of life.

That when they are parents, I believe they will desire for their children the same restraints which

they are now feeling, remembering that though they pained, they preserved.

That whatever be the power of the second query, we, like others, have, in order to be able to act up to it, much to do, and much to leave undone.

That SELF-EXAMINATION, by leading us to *think before we speak*, would lead to the query: "How should I like what I am now disposed to say, to be repeated to the person of whom I speak?" and if the responding heart says "no," then it is clear the detracting remark should not be made.

That if unwilling to make the remark in the presence of the individuals blamed, it would be better not to say it at all in their absence.

That satirical mirth would always be checked, could we fancy the objects of it listening or looking in at the window.

That it may seem impossible to bring restraining motives quickly enough to bear on the arising temptation, but that thought is as swift as lightning, and will come in a moment, and who is there amongst us that has not known at times the efficacy of deep though sudden prayer?

That there are prohibitions in scripture sufficient to prevent detraction, if properly attended to; and, lastly, I recommend to my younger brethren and sisters, to remember the words of the blessed Saviour, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

Now, full of anxious solicitude and discouragement, I write my concluding pages with humble but heartfelt earnestness, pressing once more on the attention of my readers the following list of preventives or remedies for detraction.

SELF-EXAMINATION,

THINKING BEFORE WE SPEAK,

The maxim, "DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD THAT OTHERS SHOULD DO UNTO YOU."

And CULTIVATION OF THE MIND, OR KNOWLEDGE, which Solomon desires us to receive "rather than choice gold."

SELF-EXAMINATION, or in other words, the self-knowledge which is its result, would, even in a worldly point of view, be our best policy, because by giving us a thorough knowledge of ourselves, it would prevent us from incurring ridicule, by censuring in others the faults which we ourselves commit; and conviction of our own frailties, by teaching us indulgence to those of others, might forbid us to give way to detraction.

THINKING BEFORE WE SPEAK would lead us to put this precautionary question to ourselves.—"Should I like to have what I am about to say, repeated to the subject of it?" and if the answer is in the negative, we must know that by persisting to say it, we should fall into the sin of detraction. The maxim of "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you," if it were constantly uppermost in our minds, and considered as it ought to be a sure guide for all our actions, must entirely, and

for ever, preserve us from the sin of detraction, and the crime of defamation.

And CULTIVATION OF THE MIND, by enabling those who meet in social intercourse to talk of things in preference to persons, would prevent the treacherous indulgence of backbiting and detraction.

These preventives, or remedies, as I have ventured to call them, are not the suggestions of an Empiric, for they are to be found in the BOOK of "the GREAT PHYSICIAN."

They are few, and simple also.

It requires no learning or science to understand them; nay, such is their virtue, that they cannot be injured even by the weakness of the person who prepares them, for their origin is not human, but divine, and they are stamped with the sacred and inimitable seal of TRUTH and REVELATION.